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DICKENSIAN CHARACTERS IN J.K. ROWLING'S *HARRY POTTER*

DICKENSIAN CHARACTERS IN J.K. ROWLING'S *HARRY POTTER*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

By

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Hendrix College
Bachelor of Arts in English and International Relations Global Studies, 2008

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ABSTRACT

J.K. Rowling includes many Dickensian-esque characters in her *Harry Potter* series. This thesis compares the characters seen in Rowling's series with many of Charles Dickens's characters, specifically those seen in *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Bleak House*. Rowling's work is similar to Dickens's novels in many ways. The most interesting connection between the two is how they treat the characters on the periphery of the societies they have created, most notably their orphans, servants, and women.

Orphans are their most obvious comparison. Each author based their texts on the story of an orphan. However, there is more to their orphan connection than just a simple orphan-on-the-doorstep story. Dickens and Rowling utilize their orphans, Harry, David, Oliver, and Esther, to garner sympathy from their readers, which gains interest in their stories. Their orphans are closely associated to death, which emphasizes their precariousness in life and their relationship to their anonymous, deceased parents.

Dickens and Rowling's servant characters are vital to their orphaned protagonists' lives and to the narrative itself. Characters such as Peggotty and Hagrid offer great moral support and love to their protagonists, David and Harry; however, Dickens and Rowling are contradictory in their representation of these beloved characters. Servant characters also have proved themselves to be self-sacrificing for the narrative and for the orphans, as seen in the characters of Jo, Nancy, and Dobby.

Finally, Dickens and Rowling have a contradictory approach to their women. They give a quiet power to their seemingly powerless women. Characters, like Ginny and Agnes, appear powerless because they are often the romantic interest for the male protagonist. Yet Rowling's women possess a quiet power found in the responsibilities placed upon the angel in the house.

Finally, each author places power in the hands of women, such as Esther, Nancy, and Ginny, in their ability to write.

This thesis examines how Rowling includes Dickensian characters in her series. It notes how the two authors use their peripheral characters to emphasize the affects their characters have on sympathetic readers.

This thesis is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother who gave me my first copy of *Harry Potter* on my thirteenth birthday, to my godmother, the children's librarian, who recommended it to her, and to my father and sister for all the love and support they have given to me over the years.

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INTRODUCTION

Critical work on J.K. Rowling's famed *Harry Potter* series is becoming more widespread since the 2007 publication of the final novel in the series. The seven novel series debuted in 1997 with the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (published as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in the United States), and culminated with the publication of the last novel, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, ten years later. In the ever-growing number of critical works written on the series, most writers give a passing nod to authors and texts that have influenced the best-selling series. Many of these Potter critics identify the influence of Charles Dickens, beginning with cursory acknowledgements of the series "Dickensian, orphan-on-the-doorstep scene" (Thomas 4), as recognized by James W. Thomas in his book *Repotting Harry Potter*. Rowling's works have also been compared to Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (Granger 224), *Our Mutual Friend* (Limbach 179), and *Great Expectations* (Granger 18).

Notably, three critics find comparisons to *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and *Bleak House*—the three novels on which this thesis will focus. In her article "Children's Literature or Adult Classic? The *Harry Potter* Series and the British Novel Tradition", Paige Byam defends Rowling's books as credible novels alongside those in the British canon by stating, "true, the character of Harry is an adolescent—but so are Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, and Charles Dicken's Pip, and Esther Summerson" (8). Critic Roni Natov defines Rowling's protagonist Harry saying, "he becomes the child-hero of his own story, like Dickens's 'favorite child,' the orphan hero of *David Copperfield*" (126) and in the same collection of essays, writer M. Katherine Grimes notes the importance of the motherless child in Rowling's work and *Oliver Twist* (Grimes 101). With the exception of John Granger's chapter in his book *Harry Potter's Bookshelf: The Great Books Behind the Hogwarts Adventure*, which takes an in-depth look at the

connection between *Harry Potter* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, most critics' acknowledgement of the similarities is minor. The majority of critics only note the fact that Dickens and Rowling build their novels on a bildungsroman of an orphan. However, more similarities exist between the two authors' works beyond their orphaned protagonists.

Serialization

Dickens and Rowling's fame stems from the fact that they both know how to keep their audience enthralled. Serialization has played an important part in their successes. *Oliver Twist* was published in installments in *Bentley's Miscellany* from January 1837 to April 1839 (Dunn xii). The serialization of *David Copperfield* began its twenty installments in 1849 (Jones xiii). The third Dickens novel this thesis will address, *Bleak House*, was serialized from March 1852 through August 1853 (Dunn xiii). Rowling's epic began publication in 1997 and was divided into the following seven novels released over the next ten years: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, and finally, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*¹.

Dickens's serializations were largely published in magazines. Entire novels, particularly the length of Dickens's tomes, were expensive; therefore, dividing their publication into cheaply bound serials in popular magazines made them widely accessible to the Victorian public. The divisions of Rowling's story follow Harry's seven years at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Dividing her story into seven novels was an intelligent plan, as even her first novel was considered by children's publishers to be "about three times as long as children's novels should be" (Anelli 44). Their length only grew from there; her largest book, *The Order of the Phoenix*, measures a hefty seven hundred and sixty-six pages in the Bloomsbury printing.

The division of their works assured the continuation of suspense between installments. This suspense created a ripple effect. The anticipation surrounding future publications piqued future readers' curiosities thereby increasing each author's popularity and sales. Gerald Giles Grubb, in his article "Dickens' Pattern of Weekly Serialization", calls Dickens "a master in the art of serialization" (156). Certainly, the same could be said of Rowling and her series. Editor of the fan-site MuggleNet, Melissa Anelli tells of the sheer popularity of Rowling's books in her book *Harry, A History*. She writes, "[the debut of the second novel] made history and created another wave of press: it was the first children's novel to hit the top of a best-seller list" (Anelli 57). A children's book had made it to the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list, prompting Bloomsbury to publish the series with less juvenile cover illustrations to disguise the novel for adult readers (Anelli 57). The series' success became a growing controversy in the literary world. By the time *The Goblet of Fire* was released, Rowling's four novels held the first four spots on the *New York Times* best-seller list and had been enjoying this limelight for over a year (Anelli 74-5) to the chagrin of many. The success and staying power of the novels prompted the *New York Times* to create the children's best-seller list, which helped promote children's literature and took *Harry Potter*'s monopoly off of the adult best-seller list. It is her success due to serialization that initially links Rowling to Dickens. If it were not for Rowling's success, critics would not have taken a second look at the value and literary influences of her seven-novel narrative.

Dickensian Characters

In 2005, J.K. Rowling gave a joint interview with the fan sites MuggleNet and The Leaky Cauldron. In this interview she discusses her novels saying, "mine are very character-driven books" (Anelli/Spartz). The same applies to novels of Charles Dickens. Throughout his career,

Dickens received wild success from the fifteen novels and four collections of short stories he wrote. Dickens's characters distinguish his fiction, particularly his secondary characters. In this paper, secondary characters will be defined as those characters on the periphery of society: orphans, servants and women. These are the characters that start life at an unfair advantage through some sort of prejudice and evoke sympathy from readers. It is Dickens's characters, and not his complex narratives, that initially stick in one's memory. Once reading them, few can forget sly Fagin, rosy Peggotty, or downtrodden Jo. Similarly, Rowling's cold Snape, emotional Hagrid, and precocious Dobby are not easily forgotten.

Dickens is widely known for writing social critiques of his own Victorian society; however, his fame as a social novelist would not have been as successful if it were not for his characters. His sympathetic characters are what made his readers take notice of the impoverishment and discrimination of those on the periphery of society. This thesis will examine Rowling and Dickens's secondary characters and the similarities in how the authors use them to earn readers' sympathy and thus constant interest. An in-depth look at the authors' many orphans, servants, and angelic women will be taken to view how Rowling uses her memorable characters in a similar fashion as Dickens's infamous ones. Rowling's Dickensian characters help show that Rowling's contemporary England was in the same social struggle as Dickens's Victorian England. Rowling's improvement on Dickens's characters and tropes impresses upon the reader the continual social confinement Rowling's contemporary society felt, and proves that one cannot read Rowling's works as social critiques without seeing the influence Dickens has on her texts.

CHAPTER ONE: Blood Status in Victorian and Muggle England

Before viewing the characters on the periphery in Dickens and Rowling's works, the structure of these fictional societies needs to be examined. The societies in which Dickens and Rowling base their stories are closely related. Dickens's world is historical. He sets his stories in the society that existed around him—that of Victorian England. Rowling's saga contains two separate societies: Muggle and magical. The Muggle, or non-magical, world that Rowling writes about is England in the 1990s. Rowling's magical world, that she has secreted away amidst the Muggle world, is extremely similar to the England Dickens knew. By examining Dickens's Victorian England and Rowling's magical world, one can see that the two societies are mirrors of one another, and that the social hierarchy and fears that arose in Victorian England exist in Rowling's magical world. Neither society has allayed the fear the upper classes felt towards the rising middle classes or the anger and frustration felt in the impoverished lower classes. In both Victorian and wizarding society class defines and confines its characters.

Magical history tells us that in 1689 the International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy was put into place to separate the magical world from the Muggle world (Ark 167). The Statute was created to protect wizards from Muggles as knowledge of wizards' existence often ended in violence. Therefore, up until 1689 only one society, an amalgamation of wizard and Muggle, existed. From that date on, that one society was split into two separate communities, and they no longer developed at the same rate. Despite the advances that magic gives to wizards and witches, socially their society is roughly one hundred years behind in its evolution because Rowling's magical world is Dickens's Victorian England—Rowling's magical world in the 1990s is at the same stage as Dickens's society was in the mid-1800s. The two societies have divided themselves into similar social hierarchies. Within Rowling's magical world, there exists

an aristocracy, a middle class, and a lower class all of which are based off of the social hierarchy that existed in Dickens's works. Dickens's Victorian England was on the precipice of great social change. The development of the rising middle class threatened the former social order and those who ruled. Rowling depicts the wizarding world in the same turmoil.

For centuries in England, blood determined social status, and the Victorian aristocracy were the last vestiges of that belief. In his book *Victorian People and Ideas*, Richard D. Atlick explains each social division. The Victorian social structure was based on hereditary privilege (Atlick 18) and the aristocracy was at the top, just below the royalty. Atlick describes the aristocracy as, "the families of blood, wealth, and venerable name, some three hundred of them in the early Victorian period, who had continually strengthened their position by intermarriage and by playing commanding roles in political life" (Atlick 20). In the Victorian period, the rising middle class threatened the aristocracy, mainly due to the Industrial Revolution changing the basis of the national economy from agriculture to industry. Thus began what Atlick calls the "'vulgarization' of the old aristocracy by the infusion of plutocratic blood" (Atlick 21).

Aristocratic families gained their wealth from owning land and agriculture was their main source of prosperity. The influx of an industry-based economy threatened the aristocracy's place in society. In order to keep their positions at the forefront of society, families needed money and relied upon their political influences to retain their positions in society. They began to marry wealthy, non-aristocratic families, to ensure the continuation of their status in society.

Rowling's Pure Bloods reflect the social position and fears of the Victorian aristocracy. Pure Blood families are the oldest wizarding families in the magical world. Their family trees are not tainted by Muggle blood. In her book *Prejudice in Harry Potter's World*, Karen Brown explains the social divisions found in wizarding society. The Pure Bloods have "the strongest

ties to the elite and most prestigious organizations, such as Hogwarts, Gringotts, and the Ministry of Magic” (Brown 41). Only a few true Pure Blood families are left in the magical world. The continuation of wizarding society depends on Pure Blood families mixing with Muggles. For Pure Blood families like the Blacks and Malfoys, only blood, wealth, and name are of any consequence. Although not all Pure Blood families are rich (the Weasleys being the main exception), most Pure Blood families are wealthy and hold important positions in the magical world. Pure Blood families who believe themselves to be the elite of society, hold great hatred towards those families who have either intermarried or accept Half-bloods. The Malfoys, the most prominent Pure Blood family in Rowling’s series, are such a family².

Next in the Victorian hierarchy is the middle class. The middle class consists of the gentry who share many of the aristocracy’s “privileges and sympathies and [are] often connected with it by birth or marriage” writes Atlick (25). This class included baronets like Sir Leicester Dedlock from *Bleak House*. It also included those families without birth or marriage who managed to scale the social wall thanks to industry and economy through the development of factories and the financier. Atlick is quick to point out that the boundaries of the middle class are blurred: “its upper and nether boundaries...have never been very clear and...become increasingly indistinct as time went on” (28). The definition of who is in the middle class is dependent upon who is defining it at the time, which makes for a very large and changeable class. Atlick also names this group as the “moral heart of Victorian society, a conviction assisted by the shift of the economic center of gravity in its direction” (29). This moral heart can be seen in Dickens’s Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies from *Oliver Twist*. They were intent upon helping poor Oliver long before they realized he was part of their family. *Bleak House*’s Esther is another good example of the moral heart as she followed the philanthropic Mrs. Pardiggle to

serve and proselytize to the brick-maker and his family. Atlick points out that, “At a rough guess, 90 percent of the characters in the Victorian fiction which is read today belong to the middle class and the gentry” (33). The majority of the main characters within the Dickensian novels this thesis discusses, with the exception of *Oliver Twist*, are members of the middle class, and Dickens’s main readership was from the middle class.

Rowling’s middle class closely mimics Dickens’s middle class in how their defining borders are blurred and how they are the moral heart of her story. The magical middle class consists of Half-bloods³ and Mudbloods. Half-bloods are the product of when “witches and wizards were obliged to inter-marry with Muggles in order to prolong the survival of their species” writes Brown (41). This definition seems simple enough, but it is complicated by terms within wizarding society itself. Brown explains, “in wizarding terms, one is not necessarily a Pure-blood even if he or she should have two magical parents. A Muggle-born witch or wizard will invariably produce ‘half-blood’ off-spring if they mate with pure-blood or half-blood partners” (Brown 41-2). Harry Potter is a prime example of this confusion.

Harry is lumped into this social category with his friend Hermione, who is the only magical person in her Muggle family. Harry’s father James was a wizard and his mother Lily was the first witch ever discovered in her Muggle family. Even though he came from a witch and a wizard, Harry is still considered Half-blood in wizarding terms. Although Hermione and Harry are in the same social class, some consider Hermione even lower than Harry because she is what Pure Blood’s derogatorily call a Mudblood—a Muggle-born who has muddied the pure blood of the wizarding race. When Lord Voldemort infiltrates the Ministry of Magic he enacts strict measures to kill off Mudbloods and Half-bloods from wizarding society. Under the new Muggle-Born Registration Commission, headed by Dolores Umbridge, all witches and wizards

are subject to close scrutiny of their family trees. The Ministry produces propaganda like the pamphlet Harry finds entitled, “Mudbloods and the Dangers They Pose to a Peaceful Pure-Blood Society” (*Deathly Hallows* 205) to help legitimize their new stance. The Pure Bloods are planning a cull of all Muggle-borns to ensure wizarding blood be kept clean and unadulterated; Rowling pits the hero of her story against such an agenda. Harry, his blood status, and his viewpoint are the moral heart of her story.

The last echelon in Victorian society is the lower class. Dickens wrote much about the plight of the lower class, as they are the most objectified class in society. The lower class was primarily made up of poor laborers, the majority of whom lived in abject poverty. They are the largest population in Victorian society, and it is the social hierarchy itself that kept the poor relegated to the lower class, unable to move beyond their circumstances. Laws ensured the confinement of the lower class. Government-run institutions, such as the workhouses, gave the poor a place to live and work, while making certain they never earned enough money to break free of their poverty. Social critics, like Dickens, used their works to point out the hypocrisies within society and bring the living conditions of the poor to the forefront of middle class thought.

The lower class in Rowling’s world consists of those without magical powers—Squibs and Muggles—and magical creatures. Squibs are witches and wizards who cannot perform magic. Brown notes that,

Squibs might just be the unfortunate bi-products of centuries of inbreeding amongst Pure-bloods. However, because they have very little or no magical powers, and since magical ability—particularly the ability to use wands—is such an important signifier of empowerment within the magical community, Muggle-borns must occupy a higher place in this hierarchical set-up. (Brown 42)

Squibs lack of magical power is viewed as a disability. Brown writes, “It is perceived as a shameful thing for a witch or wizard to produce non-magical offspring” (Brown 43). Squibs are

seen twice in *Harry Potter*. First is Mrs. Figg, the cat-loving old neighbor of the Dursleys. Her Squib status is not mocked as she occupies an important role in the group the Order of the Phoenix. Mr. Filch's Squib status *is* mocked, however. Through Mr. Filch, we can see how the majority of wizarding society treats Squibs. Filch's only use in the magical world is as the caretaker of Hogwarts. His job as glorified janitor of Hogwarts denigrates him in the eyes of the wizarding world. Although Squibs are magical and possibly even from Pure Blood families, the fact that they cannot perform magic baffles wizarding society so they are placed in the lower class and left to their own devices.

Muggles are the other group that occupy wizarding lower class, as they have no magical connections whatsoever. The wizarding world views their lack of magical knowledge as pathetic. Steve Vander Ark, the author of *The Lexicon*, writes, "Many wizards look upon Muggles with disdain, viewing them as lesser beings, while others, like Arthur Weasley, simply seem to think they're kind of cute" (Ark 213). Strict wizarding laws prohibit wizards and witches from revealing themselves (and thus the entire magical world) to Muggles. In the eyes of the wizarding world, Muggles are better left ignorant and in the dark. Wizarding laws are in place to prohibit Muggles from learning about the existence of magic and profiting from it.

Magical creatures are part of the lower class because although they can perform magic, they are creatures and not human. Magical creatures are goblins, house-elves, centaurs, werewolves, giants, merpeople, leprechauns, vels, ogres, and miscellaneous dark creatures, according to Brown. All of these creatures are either capable of some sort of magic or are half-breeds⁴. Wizarding society keeps them separate from humans and relations between them have always been precarious at best.

Rowling creates a world closely related to the hierarchy that existed in Dickens's Victorian England. They share similar social structures and struggles: the aristocracies fear their dissolution, their middle classes are encroaching on the aristocracy's territory, and their lower classes are left forgotten and ignorant. Both Dickens and Rowling fight for a different type of society in which their moral heart—their middle class—is the center and the lower class's struggles are recognized. Given that we now understand the social structure in both Dickens and Rowling's works, we can see how the type of characters we are about to discuss lie on the periphery of their respective societies and what struggles they have as we enter the discussion of how Rowling uses Dickensian characters in her series.

CHAPTER TWO: The Orphan

What is it about Dickens and Rowling's novels that make them so phenomenally popular? John Granger answers that question in regards to Rowling's novels. He believes, "it's not anything Harry says, has, or does; it's what Harry *is*. An orphan" (Granger 14). The same applies to Dickens. To squash any lingering doubts about the literary appeal and sales drive of Rowling, Granger aptly compares her success to Dickens when he writes,

A finalist in any 'greatest novelists of all time competition'—not one of whose books has ever gone out of print—Charles Dickens changed the English novel almost single-handedly from gentry diversion to popular entertainment, agency for social change and personal transformation, and vehicle of profound meaning. And he did all that with orphan novels. (Granger 18)

Granger's quote recognizes what similar critics have noted between Rowling and Dickens—the orphan. However, critics' in-depth exploration of this connection stops at merely identifying that they write orphan novels. There is much more to this simple connection, however. Dickens and Rowling use orphans in their texts as catalysts for the effects Granger mentions. In order for their texts to be vehicles of social change, they must first draw their reader into their text. To do so, they use their orphans' sympathetic natures to draw an emotional response from their reader. This chapter will look at how Dickens and Rowling connect their orphans to death, thereby exacerbating readership sympathy, and it will examine the power the authors give to secondary orphan characters in the narrative of the plot.

Sympathetic Readers and Characters

Through the narrative drive of the orphan, Dickens and Rowling are able to open their novels to intrigue. Writing an orphan into the narrative opens the story up to the mystery of his or her parentage—a mystery that will inevitably be solved before the end of the novel. In regards to this thesis, all of the protagonists in the novels that will be discussed are orphans and

by the conclusion of their respective novels, they all discover their parentage and their reason for being orphaned. Yet there is more to the popularity of these novels than a simple mystery that turns the pages.

Looking at our three Dickensian novels and Rowling's series, Esther, Oliver, David, and Harry are the victims of their surroundings. In reality, their individual success at life are unlikely; therefore, the reader wants these downtrodden main characters to overcome their humble beginnings. "The orphan as a child commands instant pity in his or her need of security and love; the achievement of both, by the end of the novel, thus becomes both more dramatic and more pleasure-giving" (78) writes Graham Storey in his book *David Copperfield: Interweaving Truth and Fiction*. This emotional involvement in the outcome of the characters' lives and their ultimate triumph is what kept Dickens's audience reading from installment to installment and Rowling's readers queuing up for hours on each novel's release date. John Granger furthers the idea of reader involvement by stating, "quite simply, there is no one to care for the orphan. The reader can step right in, at least imaginatively, and do the human, caring, right thing—namely, adopt and embrace him as one of our own. He has no one, so we identify him as one of us" (Granger 18). Each author banked on their audiences feeling empathy for their main characters. Without the reader's ability to sympathize with the main character, Dickens and Rowling would not have been as successful. They owe their successes to their readers, not only for purchasing their works, but also for being willing to step into the narrative and see the orphans' tales to their conclusions.

In order to illicit sympathy from their readers, Rowling and Dickens needed to be able to write a character worthy of sympathy, and, as evidenced by their introductions, each author made certain audiences would feel sympathy for their heroes. As each protagonist emerged, they

suffered cruel and unfair punishments, and became victims of their environments. The reader immediately pitied the downtrodden heroes and thus began the reader's connection to the story.

One feels sympathy for Harry Potter, even before Rowling reveals the cruelty of the Dursleys. Minutes before Harry arrives at Number 4 Privet Drive, a conversation between Professor McGonagall and Headmaster Dumbledore about the Potters' death begins the reader's sympathetic connection: "'They're saying he tried to kill the Potters' son, Harry. But—he couldn't. He couldn't kill that little boy,'" (*Philosopher's Stone* 15). Professor McGonagall's emphasis on *little* boy increases the innocence surrounding Harry and makes him even more of a victim because of his child-like purity in the matter. Harry was orphaned in the midst of a reign of violence, terror, and death. The reason for Harry's orphaning casts a shadow on the entire series. Harry Potter's story is unlike *Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House*, and *David Copperfield* in that the identity of the orphan's parents and the reasons for their absences are revealed in the opening chapter of the series. Harry's abandonment was not by choice. Neither of his parents gave him up on purpose or lost the ability to care for him whilst still alive (as seen with David's mother in *David Copperfield*). It was not "far better that he had never been born" (*Bleak House* 30) nor was he his mother's disgrace, as it was for poor Esther Summerson (*Bleak House* 30). Harry was wanted and loved, but his family was taken away from him, which perhaps makes his story the most sympathetic of all. He was left to be raised by his conservative, Muggle aunt and uncle who kept him in a cupboard under the stairs, and for all intents and purposes, was made their indentured servant.

For Harry, love did not exist at Number 4 Privet Drive. At the Dursleys' most affectionate, they gave him gifts of an old pair of socks or tissue, or let him eat Dudley's discarded, half-eaten knickerbocker glory. At their worst, they kept him locked in the cupboard

or put prison bars on his bedroom window. Harry is sympathetic not only because he is ill-treated by his own family, but because a life of love, compassion, and even fame lay hidden from him for eleven years.

Of our three orphans, David Copperfield has the most similar upbringing to Harry. David was not orphaned upon birth like Oliver and Esther. In fact, he spent the first few years of his life with his parents. When his father passed away, he remained in a cozy, but moderately poor home with his affectionate mother and caring housemaid Peggotty. While he and his mother struggled financially after his father's death, David still had his mother's love. It is not until Mr. Murdstone enters the novel that David begins to lose his family and deserve his readers' sympathy. Slowly Clara Copperfield, now Clara Murdstone, fades from David's life. Under the control of cruel Murdstone, her devoted nature towards her son is stifled. It is as if all her strength lay in her first married surname and once that is replaced, she changes. Murdstone's goal is to weaken and eventually separate child and mother. His scheme goes as planned and soon after David is sent to boarding school, Clara dies leaving David a true orphan. Left to defend for himself, David begins an adult-life working in Murdstone's factory at a tender age and soon finds himself penniless, homeless, and alone. David evokes sympathy because he fell from such a loving home and slipped through the cracks. It is hard to image David succeeding after such a fall, but the rest of the novel follows David as he grows into a respectable young man.

Esther Summerson's origins are obscured in secrecy and scandal. She is raised by her godmother (whom she later discovers was her aunt) and lacks a childhood of love. The only love she receives comes from her imagination in the form of her "dear faithful Dolly" (*Bleak House* 28). From an early age Esther was told that she was unlike other children because of her

unfortunate mother. After being told such things, particularly on her birthday, Esther would quietly lament her life:

I went up to my room, and crept to bed, and laid my doll's cheek against mine wet with tears; and holding that solitary friend upon my bosom, cried myself to sleep. Imperfect as my understanding of my sorrow was, I knew that I had brought no joy, at any time, to anybody's heart, and that I was to no one upon earth what Dolly was to me. (*Bleak House* 31)

The love Harry and David had in their early lives was absent in Esther's childhood. She was taught to work hard and expect no love from the world because of her illegitimacy. The reader feels great pity for Esther because her need and desire for love are so apparent, yet she feels so unworthy that she buries her beloved Dolly in the back garden to deny herself Dolly's love. Esther is so pitiful that she does not even allow herself love sprung from her own imagination.

Oliver Twist had the hardest upbringing of all the orphans and perhaps the most realistic of them all. With *Oliver Twist*, Dickens tried to bring the ill-treatment of the working poor to forefront of the Victorian middle class thought. Born in a workhouse, Oliver was orphaned minutes after he was born. His mother had been found in the streets and her identity unknown. When she passed, Oliver was left to fight for himself. Dickens writes, "Oliver cried lustily. If he could have known that he was an orphan left to the tender mercies of churchwardens and overseers, perhaps he would have cried the louder" (*Oliver Twist* 3). He was sent to a branch-workhouse and raised where "twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor laws, rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing" (*Oliver Twist* 3-4). By sheer luck, Oliver survived his upbringing, while many of the babies around him died of starvation, suffocation from being smothered, or were scalded to death. He was sold by the parish to Mr. Sowerberry the undertaker. In spite of the hard life he had already had by the age of nine, Oliver maintained an innocent spirit and because of his melancholy look,

he became the child mute that lead funeral processions. Yet his precarious fortune did not last long. In a rage against multiple insults towards his mysterious mother, Oliver was locked in the cellar and starved. He escaped and made the long, hard trek to London. Of all the orphans, Oliver is the most alone, therefore we feel the most sorrow for him; however, Dickens is quick to insist that it is because Oliver was left alone that he survived. If he had been born with family around him, he would have died when he showed no signs of breathing upon birth. He survived because he was left alone to struggle and fight, and that will to live stays with him throughout his tale.

Parental Influence

Our orphans' lives begin marred by the actions of their parents. At Hogwarts, Harry suffers under the cruel punishments of Professor Snape because Harry greatly resembles his father James, Snape's childhood enemy. In *Bleak House*, Lady Dedlock gave birth to Esther out of wedlock, only to be told Esther had died. Lady Dedlock's sister secretly took Esther and raised her by herself. Esther's aunt piled all of her resentment towards her sister onto poor Esther and made her feel inferior to all others. David is left alone after the death of his mother because his father kept no familial ties after marrying Clara. David learns the meaning of solitude and poverty before reaching adulthood. Oliver is an orphan, not solely because his mother died, but because he, like Esther, was born out of wedlock. His mother believed she and her child would be rejected once her pregnancy was revealed, so she fled. The strain of being on the streets combined with the strain of giving birth orphaned Oliver. If he had been the product of a happy marriage, Oliver would have had a different fate.

An interesting note with Oliver's story however, is that his mere existence is part of why he was orphaned. His mother died minutes after childbirth. While she gave Oliver life, he

played an unwitting part in her death. The same can be said about Harry. Lily and James Potter were members of the secret group the Order of the Phoenix, which sought the destruction of Lord Voldemort. It is probable that they would have been killed, as many of their compatriots were, because of their allegiance. However, it was a prophecy that brought Lord Voldemort to their doorstep on Halloween. The prophecy states,

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches....born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not...and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives....the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies.... (emphasis original *Order of the Phoenix* 741)

It is because of this prophecy that Lord Voldemort kills Harry's parents and attempts to kill him. Harry's birth brought about a prophecy about the destruction of Lord Voldemort. In the same way Oliver is blameless in his mother's death, Harry holds no culpability in his parents' deaths, yet if it were not for him, they may have lived. Our orphans remain innocent in the trajectory of their lives as children. The orphans begin their lives with a debt that their parents' accrued. Thus, because the orphans' situations are unfair given their innocence, a deeper connection is forged between the protagonists and their readers.

Association with Death

Rowling and Dickens chose their orphans' paths to develop alongside images of death because death stresses the orphans' tenuous existence and this existence makes the reader more sympathetic. Perhaps because of their precarious births, our orphans share an attraction to death. With the exception of David, all of them tread the line between life and death very carefully. In the first few moments of Oliver's life, he was cast aside and assumed dead because he could not breathe. His survival until age nine was a feat in and of itself considering he suffered starvation and an extremely careless upbringing. Oliver's work as a mute in funeral processions brought

death into the everyday for him. At Sowerberry's he is surrounded by coffins either being made or ready for occupation. The coffins act as reminders of his mother's death, of his frail existence, and his eventual demise into one. It is only fitting that Oliver leaves Sowerberry's coffins whilst in a rage. His attack on Noah Claypole was so unlike his timid character that only his instinct for preservation could have made him find the courage to rebel and escape Mr. Sowerberry's cellar. In his book *Oliver Twist: Whole Heart and Soul*, Richard J. Dunn remarks on Oliver's relationship with death: "It is not surprising for us to find something ghostly about Oliver, and he often serves as the reminder of a lost past as well as an example of present suffering" (Dunn 60). Oliver's surroundings only remind him of the fine line between life and death. Many characters around Oliver die, including his closest friend Dick who calmly accepts the diagnosis of his eventual death. Nancy saves Oliver by offering herself as a sacrifice for him. Her valiant actions and brutal death will be discussed later, but it is important to note here that yet another woman in his life died to ensure that he lived.

The motif of death continues in *Bleak House*. Esther catches small pox from her maid Charley and the street sweeper Jo. For a few chapters, her life hangs in the balance as she deliriously fights the disease, and if it were not for the fact that half of *Bleak House* comprises of Esther's narrative and she is the heroine of the novel, one may undoubtedly assume she would die. Additionally, Esther is closely associated to the Ghost Walk. At the same time that she is repulsed by the story surrounding the Ghost Walk and the eerie feeling that overcomes her when there, she is conversely drawn to that spot. It is there that Lady Dedlock reveals that she is Esther's mother. Esther is a ghost for Lady Dedlock in that she believed Esther to be dead, as her sister told her. In a sense, Esther was born at the Ghost Walk because at that moment she becomes aware of her mother and father for the first time. Yet in the moment that she is born to

her origins, she also becomes completely orphaned because Esther makes the conscious decision with Lady Dedlock to never speak of her lineage, or to her mother, again. The Ghost Walk is where Esther Hawdon, the beloved child, dies and becomes the ghost that historically haunts the Lady of Chesney Wold.

Finally, Harry's life is marred by and inextricably bound to death. The prophecy that bound him to Lord Voldemort destroyed many of the familial connections he had in his life. Death seems to follow him. The list of people that die around him is staggering: his parents, Cedric Diggory, Sirius Black, Albus Dumbledore, Tonks, Remus Lupin, Fred Weasley, Colin Creevey, and Professor Snape to name just a few. Also, because of the prophecy, his life is linked with death. The prophecy states that neither Lord Voldemort nor Harry can live while the other is alive. Because it was prophesized, one *must* kill the other. This fact is kept from Harry until the fifth book when he is old enough to grasp his future. However, from the very first novel, Harry has had some very narrow misses with death. In every novel, Harry is almost killed by something that can usually be traced back to Lord Voldemort. His narrow misses begin when he was almost killed by Professor Quirrell who was incubating Lord Voldemort's spirit⁵. Finally, in the culmination of his association with death, Harry fights Lord Voldemort and willingly dies to save his friends; he is allowed the chance to return to life because he voluntarily accepted his fate with death. He approached death willingly and was granted life.

Death follows Harry, and until he meets Lord Voldemort and death in the Forbidden Forest in *The Deathly Hallows*, his relationship with death has not been something he has consciously sought. Nevertheless, Harry can be seen to unconsciously seek death in the form of his dead family. In *The Philosopher's Stone* he becomes transfixed at the Mirror of Erised because it shows him his entire family who have all passed away. In the mirror that shows

“nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 157) Harry sees those he cannot reach in his lifetime; therefore, Harry’s most desperate desire is to die so he can be in communion with those he lost.

The same theme is again seen as the ghosts of those Lord Voldemort has killed climb out of Lord Voldemort’s wand when the spell *Priori Incantatum* takes hold of their dueling wands. These ghosts, including those of the Potters and Cedric, prevent Lord Voldemort from killing Harry and thusly joining them in death. As the ghost Cedric climbs out of Lord Voldemort’s wand it says, ““Hold on, Harry,”” (*Goblet of Fire* 578). Although the ghost of Cedric is literally telling Harry to hold on to his wand so as not to break the connection between his wand and Lord Voldemort’s and to wait for all the ghosts to appear before he runs, in a way death in the form of Cedric’s ghost is telling Harry to wait for the death he subconsciously desires, which appears in the ghostly forms of those he has loved and lost through Lord Voldemort.

Ghosts appear again, in the final book as Harry turns the Resurrection Stone in his hand. Realizing that he himself is a Horcrux and the only person standing between Lord Voldemort’s immortality and destruction, Harry decides to face his own death. As he turns the Resurrection Stone in his hand those he loves the most return: Lupin, Sirius, and his parents. They guide him to his death and as Harry begins his final walk to Lord Voldemort, Harry asks if they will stay with him in his final moments, to which he receives the answer, ““We are part of you,” said Sirius. ‘Invisible to anyone else’” (*Deathly Hallows* 561). This answer implies that these ghosts, these representations of death, have always been with Harry. More so than the ghosts that chose to remain at Hogwarts, the ghosts of those who chose to “go on” state that they have always been close to Harry and that they are, in fact, a part of him. Whether it exists in his subconscious or in

reality, death has always been a part of Harry Potter. While Dickens's orphans may not flirt with death in as dramatic a way as Harry, it is just as present in Esther and Oliver's lives.

The Portrait

Dickens and Rowling give the reader clues as to their orphans' heritage long before the orphans themselves solve that mystery. These clues guarantee continual readers. Often the orphans' physical appearances give clues as to their parentage. Connections to their parents' likenesses are specifically seen in three texts, *Harry Potter*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Bleak House*.

In *Bleak House* the forlorn Mr. Guppy comes across a portrait of the current Lady Dedlock and his curiosity is piqued:

“Blest!” says Mr. Guppy, staring in a kind of dismay at his friend, “if I can ever have seen her. Yet I know her!”... he still remains so absorbed by the portrait, that he stands immovable before it until the young gardener has closed the shutters; when he comes out of the room in a dazed state, that is an odd though a sufficient substitute for interest, and follows into the succeeding rooms with a confused stare, as if he were looking everywhere for Lady Dedlock again. (*Bleak House* 111)

This scene is the first clue Dickens gives as to Esther's parentage. Guppy knows the face of Lady Dedlock because he has seen it before in the face of Esther, his unrequited love and “angel”. Seeing Esther's likeness out of context greatly confuses him, but he spends the rest of the novel piecing things together, and in fact, it is Guppy who discovers the love connection between Captain Hawdon and Honoria Barbary. The bewilderment Guppy feels upon viewing the portrait mirrors the emotional confusion Esther feels when she first sees Lady Dedlock. Esther recalls the image of broken glass when seeing her mother's face for the first time saying, “But why her face should be, in a confused way, like a broken glass to me, in which I saw scraps of old remembrances; and why I should be so fluttered and troubled (for I was still), by having casually met her eyes; I could not think” (*Bleak House* 292). Lady Dedlock and Esther unconsciously recognize their own faces in the other and that unconscious recognition stirs up

strong emotions within the two. This meeting confirms for the reader the familial ties between Lady Dedlock and Esther, but Guppy and Mr. Tulkinghorn must interfere in the narrative to prove the reader's suspicions.

Oliver sees the portrait of his mother as he recovers from a near death experience. Mr. Brownlow takes him into his house and an exhausted Oliver is nursed back to health. As he gathers his strength he takes notice of the portrait in his room of a lady, thinking, “‘the eyes look so sorrowful; and where I sit, they seemed fixed upon me. It makes my heart beat,’ added Oliver in a low voice, ‘as if it was alive, and wanted to speak to me, but couldn’t’” (*Oliver Twist* 68). Oliver experiences physiological symptoms when gazing upon the portrait of his mother. The portrait of the woman who gave him life makes his heart beat harder and her gaze lay upon him as he slept through his illness. As Dunn explains in his dissection of this scene, “it is important to remember that Oliver neither looks at the portrait as a sort of mirror nor even realizes that this is his mother, although he feels an uncanny attraction to the image” (Dunn 60). What Oliver feels when he sees his mother's portrait is instinctive, just as it was for Esther. With Esther, Dickens gives us two separate examples of the portrait of the mother and the face of the child. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens gives us both when he places Oliver's bed under the portrait of his mother and leaves Mr. Brownlow to make the connection:

The old idea of the resemblance between his features and some familiar face came upon him so strongly, that he could not withdraw his gaze.

“I hope you are not angry with me, sir?” said Oliver, raising his eyes beseechingly.

“No, no,” replied the old gentleman. “Why! what's this? Bedwin, look there!”

As he spoke, he pointed hastily to the picture over Oliver's head; and then to the boy's face. There was its living copy. The eyes, the head, the mouth; every feature was the same. The expression was, for the instant, so precisely alike, that the minutest line seemed copied with startling accuracy! (*Oliver Twist* 69)

Since the narrative of *Oliver Twist* is not necessarily about his heritage, but about how he returns to the family who loves him, the connection between Oliver and his rightful family is made early on in the novel, unlike with Esther who's lineage is revealed much later.

In these two instances, we see Dickens placing a family portrait next to the orphan to hint at their relationship and show that the orphan's likenesses to his or her family go beyond the physical. Esther has her mother's strength and honor. Just as her mother tried to do the honorable thing and keep her past pregnancy from her husband to save his reputation, Esther promises to keep her mother's secret as well. Esther continually does the respectable thing and the love that Honoria stifled when she thought Captain Hawdon had died, thrives in Esther. Oliver has his mother's kindness and compassion. He maintains the innocence his young mother had despite her indiscretions.

Rowling imitates the Dickensian portrait in her novels. The mystery behind the Potters' deaths focuses more on Harry's innocent part in their murder. As soon as the series opens, we know who his parents were and part of why they died. The rest of the novel centers on the question of why Harry survived and his parents did not. The only times Harry sees portraits of his parents are in the album of photographs Hagrid gives Harry at the end of his first year of school and in the Mirror of Erised when Harry sees his whole family for the first time.

The images of his parents reiterate how much Harry misses having blood ties and a loving family, and like the images Dickens uses, they illustrate the similarities between Harry and his family. Harry is continually told how much he resembles his father, but has his mother's eyes. His physical resemblance to his father causes him problems throughout his life. The untidy hair that was passed on from his father magically grows back anytime the Dursleys cut it, much to the chagrin of his aunt and uncle. During his time at Hogwarts, Harry's stature mimics

that of his father's. He looks so much like his father that in *The Order of the Phoenix* when Harry enters Snape's worst memory of being teased by James, for a moment Harry thinks the boy he sees is himself and not his father James:

Excitement exploded in the pit of his stomach: it was as though he was looking at himself but with deliberate mistakes. James's eyes were hazel, his nose was slightly longer than Harry's, and there was no scar on his forehead, but they had the same thin face, same mouth, same eyebrows. James's hair stuck up at the back exactly as Harry's did, his hands could have been Harry's, and Harry could tell that when James stood up, they would be within an inch of each other in height. (*Order of the Phoenix* 565)

Snape tortures Harry because of Harry's likeness to James. Snape cannot look at Harry and not remember James and his taunting; therefore, he takes his anger out on innocent Harry. Just as Esther and Oliver learned a harsh truth about their mothers when they were pregnant out of wedlock, Harry learns the lesson that his father was an arrogant bully when he was younger. Harry refuses to be the bully James was in his childhood⁶.

While Rowling's presentation is different, her utilization of the image of the orphan's parents parallels Dickens's portraits in his novels. While their parents' identities are obscured for part of their stories, we learn how the orphans unknowingly share similarities with their parents through their physical resemblances.

Compassionate Orphans

Harry, Oliver, David, and Esther share a similar past—they all lacked the love and comfort of family. This type of upbringing made them more sensitive to the needs of others. In Pam Morris's *Dickens's Class Consciousness*, the idea of orphans being empathetic to others is introduced. Morris writes, "Esther's earliest sense of self-identity is represented as founded upon the experience of marginalization and lack" (Morris 92). As explicated earlier, our orphans' circumstances have affected them deeply, and no orphan shows just how much it has affected them than Esther. Morris further explains Esther by saying, "This need to relate

meaningfully to the social world in which she finds herself, to know her place within it, makes Esther more than willing to pay the price of admission into social community” (Morris 92). Thus, Esther can be seen feeling for others more than any other orphan. Her sympathetic nature is inherent within her. She exudes a caring and compassionate spirit. It is her empathy that moves Mr. Jarndyce to give Charley a position as Esther’s apprentice when Charley’s father dies and Caddy Jellyby to take immediate notice of the kindness within Esther when they first meet. Esther’s compassion follows her wherever she goes. There are countless examples of her empathy throughout the text—covering the brickmaker’s baby with her handkerchief, tending to Jo when he comes to them ill, and tending to Caddy and her baby when they are maltreated under a doctor’s care. Because Esther suffered in her early childhood, kindness emanates from her in her adult life. She cannot bear to see someone suffer in any way remotely associated to the pain she knew as a child.

This trait is common in all of our orphans. Oliver has few friends, but retains a kind, polite demeanor so as to please those around him. His last meeting with his friend Dick influences how he will treat others for the rest of his life,

“Kiss me,” said the child, climbing up the low gate, and flinging his little arms round Oliver’s neck. “Good-b’ye, dear! God bless you!”

The blessing was from a young child’s lips, but it was the first that Oliver had ever heard invoked upon his head; and through the struggles and sufferings, and troubles and changes, of his after life, he never once forgot it. (*Oliver Twist* 42)

This interaction, full of compassion and love, is what makes Oliver the kind and well-meaning boy he is throughout his tale. David feels a similar sense of compassionate obligation. For all of his adult life David cares for his aunt, Mr. Dick, and the Micawbers after they fall into hard times. Whereas David cares for the downtrodden, Harry befriends the bullied. In *The Philosopher’s Stone*, his friendship with Hermione begins after he realizes she has been crying in

the bathroom after being teased. He has always had a soft spot for clumsy Neville and never tells a soul about Neville's parents after he discovers they were tortured to insanity by Bellatrix Lestrange and are permanent wardens at St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries. In fact, all of Harry's closest friends are marginalized in one way or another: the Weasleys are poor and Ron is the youngest boy in a family of nine, Hagrid is a half-giant who is the worst professor at Hogwarts, and Harry likes eccentric Luna Lovegood although her bizarre personality ostracizes her from other students. These orphans are drawn to outcasts because they, too, have been on the outside. Even when they rise, they remember their past and feel an obligation to those less fortunate, as evidenced by Harry and David's philanthropy. Whether they share their relative wealth to buy pumpkin pasties or share their apartments with their makeshift family, they remain aware of those around them.

Secondary Orphans

Interestingly, Dickens and Rowling did not just have protagonist orphans. Their texts included many more orphans who play secondary roles, but remain very important to the heroes' narratives. Monks is Oliver's half-brother, an orphan who grew to be one of the villains who impedes Oliver's path to his family. Jo connected all the characters together in the narrative web of *Bleak House*. Tommy Traddles is vital to the resolution in *David Copperfield* and in the same way, Neville Longbottom becomes the unsung hero of the *Harry Potter* series. Lastly, Lord Voldemort began his life as the orphan Tom Marvolo Riddle and his origins shaped the rest of his heinous life. These secondary orphans, in particular Tommy, Neville, and Tom, play a counterpoint role to David and Harry.

Although the entire novel *David Copperfield* follows the life of David, he is by no means the hero of his tale. David opens his story by saying, "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of

my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show” (*David Copperfield* 15). The following pages show that the main crisis of David’s adult life was not solved by him, but by Tommy Traddles. As soon as Agnes is introduced to the narrative, we know she is David’s intended. However, the trouble of the narrative comes in trying to win her. While David marries her in the end, Tommy is her savior. Tommy is the instigator in trapping Uriah Heep and revealing Uriah as the scourge he is, not David. David is present for Tommy’s triumph, but he merely observes it. Uriah blames David for his downfall, but Tommy is the true hero. It seems odd that Dickens would allow such a minor character, albeit a loveable one, to rescue the heroine, but Dickens lets orphaned Tommy have the last say in regards to the villain Uriah.

Rowling makes the same narrative choice in her development of Neville Longbottom. Throughout most of the series, Neville is hopeless; yet Harry and the reader cannot help but love him. He brings his toad Trevor to school despite the fact that even Hagrid knows they went out of fashion years ago. He has an aptitude for Herbology and loves his plant the *Mimulus mimbletonia*, a boil covered cactus that spurts Stinksap upon contact (Ark 204). He strictly adheres to the rules, even when it means standing up to his friends, and he’s a favorite victim of bullies.

Yet, as Neville matures, he grows into a surprisingly confident young man. He becomes a fierce competitor in Dumbledore’s Army, and fights Death Eaters in the Department of Mysteries and when they take over Hogwarts in Year Seven. The Neville seen in *The Deathly Hallows* is no longer the small boy who was afraid of his grandmother. In the final battle against Lord Voldemort, when all believe Harry to be dead and hope is lost, Neville stands against Lord Voldemort. Neville pulls the sword of Godric Gryffindor, which only the truly brave can

conjure, and kills Nagini, the last Horcrux, thereby making Lord Voldemort truly human and destructible once again. An interesting side note in the series is that the prophecy that prompted Lord Voldemort to kill the Potters, actually spoke of two possible boys born in July to members of the Order of the Phoenix. The other boy could have been Neville, but Lord Voldemort chose to pursue Harry. In Neville's final battle, he proves that the prophecy was equally about him. Neville contributes to weakening Lord Voldemort and kills his last obstacle to mortality. Harry could not have defeated Lord Voldemort if it were not for Neville. Neville's development paralleled Harry's, but was unseen because Rowling focused on Harry. Neville rose from being such a shy, clumsy boy into being a brave man and crucial character in the series, so much so that he deserves the credit of being feared by Lord Voldemort to a greater extent than Harry because his rise is so unexpected.

The narrative goal of the *Harry Potter* series is to determine the relationship between Harry and Lord Voldemort, and figure out why Lord Voldemort tried to kill Harry and why Harry lived. The connection between the two orphans becomes so murky that in various times throughout the series, Harry believes he could be a descendant of Lord Voldemort. Harry feels a strong pull towards the orphan Tom Riddle in *The Chamber of Secrets* when Tom reveals his story to Harry. Tom was an orphan who was told by a stranger (then Professor Dumbledore) that he was a wizard and was accepted to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Tom felt Hogwarts was the first home he had ever had and wanted to stay there all year round—feelings to which Harry can easily relate. Tom and Harry both have penchants for danger and rule-breaking while at school and even look alike. Later in the novel, Harry questions his ability to speak Parseltongue, which was a skill Lord Voldemort possessed, and the fact that the Sorting Hat wanted to place him in Slytherin House. The narrative of the entire series is bent on

discovering the relationship between the two, and when their relationship is finally revealed, it is as if Lord Voldemort is a type of parent to Harry. In trying to kill Harry, Lord Voldemort transferred a part of himself into Harry. Although Lord Voldemort's intention was to kill, he gave Harry life by transferring a part of his soul into Harry, making him a Horcrux and indestructible. By giving Harry life, he also transferred parts of himself into Harry, hence Harry's ability to speak Parseltongue and to read Lord Voldemort's emotions. Lord Voldemort plays a huge role in how the plot progresses in the series because without Voldemort, there would be no *Harry Potter*, and yet again we see a protagonist orphan owing a great deal of his literary heroism to a secondary orphan character.

Dickens and Rowling use their orphans in the same manner. They write them to grab their audience from the beginning. An orphan opens the novel up to mystery and intrigue, and garners immediate sympathy for the protagonist. Once Dickens and Rowling have their audiences' attention, they write about compassionate orphans with great parental influence (despite their absence) and a close association to death that is mirrored in the portraits they encounter of their parents. In the end, Dickens and Rowling both take the narrative power away from their protagonist orphans and place it on secondary orphans who turn out to be the unsung heroes of the tales the authors tell. Their orphan characters begin the reader's connection to the story and to the countless other downtrodden characters Dickens and Rowling write. They are the first attachment the reader makes to an oppressed character and to the social objective of their novels. Their orphans are the most obvious similarity the two authors have between their texts, but their similarities increase, as the continuing chapters will reveal.

CHAPTER THREE: The Servant

There is a great deal to be said about the influence of social hierarchy on both Dickens's Victorian England and Rowling's magical world. The social divisions found in each society are the primary basis of conflict in the authors' novels. If not for the problems that occur from social hierarchies, their novels would have no impetus. The problems in Dickens's Victorian England stem from the economic disadvantages felt by those in the middle and lower classes. Harry's story centers on the dispute that made him an orphan, which essentially focused on the importance of blood status in the wizarding world. Dickens and Rowling's narratives hinge upon the disputes that arise because of their society's perceived social hierarchies. As their orphans are the first characters seen on the periphery of society, they represent a slew of other characters on the true periphery of their novels and societies. They open up the lives of the poor and lower class characters to the reader.

The issues that arose in the history of Victorian England appear in Rowling's wizarding world. As Rowling wrote her series, her contemporary England felt the same confining economic and social disadvantages that Dickens felt, thus the reason why her wizarding society mirrors Dickens's Victorian society. Both authors use marginalized characters to bring those issues to the forefront. Their secondary characters are the characters readers first recollect because they are so vibrant, more so than their counterpart protagonists. The authors use these characters in similar manners within the narrative. Both authors write their lower class characters with such affection and attention to detail that they are their most memorable characters. They color the narrative and add a great deal to the plot's progression. Despite the authors' obvious affection for these characters, their writing reveals discrepancies in their treatment of these characters that relate to the social issues about which each author writes.

Dickens and Rowling become social novelists by allowing their voices to enter their texts through their narrators and their bereft lower class characters. Each author shows their desires conflicting with their respective society's hierarchies. This conflict is best seen in the servant characters in their texts. They force their lower class characters into the role of the servant using class conditioning, while at the same time feel great affection for them and use them to fight the proscribed social hierarchy and make their existence vital to the plot of their novels.

Social Novelists

Dickens is known as a social novelist because his novels have a social slant and projection, and are clear critiques of the treatment of the poor. He forces his reader to understand the conditions the poor live in and the implications of each life and death. He allows his own voice to enter the text numerous times in his career to emphasize his critique; for instance in *Bleak House* after the street sweeper Jo dies, Dickens writes, "Dead, your Majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with Heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us, every day" (*Bleak House* 734). In this scene Dickens departs from his third person narrator and places his own direct voice into the scene, which changes the reader's relationship to the text from mere observer to complicit bystander. By placing his own voice in the text at that moment, the reader is forced to realize that Jo's death is not simply part of the narrative, but a daily reality in the reader's world. In a similar fashion, in *Oliver Twist* Dickens writes,

Oh! if, when we oppress and grind our fellow-creatures, we bestowed but one thought on the dark evidences of human error, which, like dense and heavy clouds, are rising, slowly it is true, but not less surely, to Heaven, to pour their after-vengeance on our heads; if we heard but one instant, in imagination, the deep testimony of dead men's voices, which no power can stifle, and no pride shut out; where would be the injury and injustice: the suffering, misery, cruelty, and wrong: that each day's life brings with it! (*Oliver Twist* 182)

Dickens yet again places the burden of the poor on himself and the reader by addressing them directly and saying “we” instead of “you”. Dickens was writing what Carolyn Betensky, in her book *Feeling for the Poor*, calls social-problem novels, which “volunteer the experience of their own reading as a viable response to conflicts that seem daunting or irreconcilable. Encoded at multiple levels within the novels themselves, reading becomes *something to do* about the pain of others” (Betensky 1). Social-problem novels are “a product of growing middle-class awareness of the poverty, displacement, and degradation of the victims of industrialization and unregulated capitalism” (Betensky 3). Dickens’s political novels like *Oliver Twist* and *Bleak House* arose because people began to see the degradation around them and they felt the need for reformation in their society.

Rowling’s series is not as blatant in its social consciousness as Dickens’s works are. Her critiques are much more encoded than Dickens’s. Yet, “Much like Charles Dickens, she reveals her attitudes toward social rank through character and scene,” writes Julia Park in her article “Class and Socioeconomic Identity in Harry Potter’s England”, (Park 179). Rowling lets the narrative do the work by allowing Hermione to create the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare (S.P.E.W.), and by introducing Malfoy and revealing his prejudice towards blood status, for example. The only time Rowling comes close to inserting her own voice to her story occurs during her descriptions of the fountain at the Ministry of Magic before and after Lord Voldemort’s infiltration.

The first fountain emphasizes the importance of wizards in the magical world, “Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin, and a house-elf. The last three were all looking up adoringly at the witch and wizard” (*Order of the Phoenix* 117). Although the witch

and wizard's importance is emphasized, all magical creatures are represented in the fountain. They are all covered in gold, representing their equality and worth in society, and a sense of cooperation is garnered from looking at the fountain. The shimmering tranquility of this fountain is destroyed when the Ministry of Magic has been taken over by Lord Voldemort and his Death Eaters. The new, domineering fountain reflects a definitive change in philosophy at the Ministry, "Now a gigantic statue of black stone dominated the scene. It was rather frightening, this vast sculpture of a witch and wizard sitting on ornately carved thrones, looking down at the Ministry workers toppling out of fireplaces below them. Engraved in foot-high letters at the base of the statue were the words: MAGIC IS MIGHT" (*Deathly Hallows* 198), and a few moments later in the narrative, Harry realizes the full horror the new Ministry. Rowling writes,

Harry looked more closely and realised that what he had thought were decoratively carved thrones were actually mounds of carved humans: hundreds and hundreds of naked bodies, men, women and children, all with rather stupid, ugly faces, twisted and pressed together to support the weight of the handsomely robed wizards. (*Deathly Hallows* 199)

The two descriptions of the fountains are as close as Rowling gets to entering her personal voice into the text over a social issue. She emphasizes the adoring gazes of the magical creatures in the first fountain, and the naked, twisted bodies of the humans in the second to draw emotion and a social stance out of the reader. In their individual ways, Dickens and Rowling create social-problem novels. Rowling may hide behind a veil of a fictitious, secret world, yet the critiques that hide behind her magical characters are just as strong as Dickens's blatant one. Their treatment of servant characters acts as proof of the social power behind their texts.

Conditioned to Serve

As explained in Chapter One, both Victorian and magical societies are built on a social hierarchy based on blood status. Servants in both Victorian and Muggle worlds are relegated to

the lowest tier in their respective hierarchies. Their purpose is to serve those in the upper echelons. The characters that serve in both Dickens and Rowling's works are seemingly conditioned to be tied to their service status.

Servants are continually present in Dickens. His servants emphasize the fact that those in the lower classes are conditioned to be in service positions. Their occupation is linked to their social status, which is determined by their economic status; thus, they are servants because they are poor, and they are poor because they are servants. For the most part, we have yet to see the rising middle class play a prominent role in any of the three Dickens novels we discuss in this paper⁷. The servants we see in Dickens's works are stuck in their positions. Esther is a prime example of how conditioned the lower classes are to be servants.

Esther was raised by her aunt, and although her aunt hated her, Esther was still educated and later became a teacher for a short time. Esther is unaware of her social position in life, and the reader assumes it is low middle class given her upbringing. However, once she enters the world as a young adult, her true social position reveals itself, or rather society reveals where it believes Esther should be. After being warmly welcomed to Bleak House with Richard and Ada, when she is alone in her new room, a servant hands her the keys to the house. Unbeknownst to her, Esther comes to Bleak House as Ada's companion and as the new housekeeper. Having little idea of her position in society, Esther is thrown into the harsh reality of her status as an orphan. Esther is brought into the house for the work she can do. Because of her subservient mindset and her orphan status, Mr. Jarndyce places her in the lower class. While she is made to feel like a member of the family, her true, unspoken role in the family is not as Esther the young woman, but as Esther the housekeeper. Dickens hides Esther's work throughout the novel. We only ever see her close her housekeeping books or pocket her keys, but her lower class role as

housekeeper is still prevalent in her story. Her role as companion to Ada is a very elegant servant position, as she is allowed to live with and becomes friends with Ada. Additionally, the position of housekeeper is one of the highest servant positions one can attain. However, despite her elevated servant roles, Esther is still quietly, yet firmly placed in the lower class.

Esther's position as important member of the family and servant to that family mirrors the way house-elves are treated in the wizarding world. House-elves' sole purpose in life is to serve one wizarding family. House-elves are magically bound to their family and the two families (wizard and house-elf) grow alongside one another seemingly for eternity, or until the house-elf is presented with clothes and set free. Harry sees the relationship between house-elves and their families when he first enters Grimmauld Place and sees "a row of shrunken heads mounted on plaques on the wall. A closer look showed Harry that the heads belonged to house-elves. All of them had the same rather snout-like nose" (*Order of the Phoenix* 60). Instead of explaining the shrunken house-elves heads as a way to note the longevity of the Black family, Mrs. Weasley brushes Harry's question off and moves him up the stairs. The house-elves' servant status is so ingrained in wizard culture that neither house-elves nor wizards question it. Karen Brown explains this ingrained culture as she writes,

They [house-elves] appear to have embraced slavery completely, as a social condition which suits their skills and intrinsic worth. They have also passed on the lifestyle and mindset of enslavement from generation to generation for many centuries, and now perform the slave's role without any strict enforcement from wizards.

Wizards, in turn, have accepted the house-elves' enslavement as a way of life, to the point where they fully embrace the notion that the house-elf has certain intrinsic qualities that make him slavery-bound: Not only does he "like" being enslaved, but he is also *only* suited for enslavement. (Brown 90-1)

The conditioning that Brown explains can be seen numerous times within the text. It takes Dobby, the free house-elf, and Hermione, a witch from a Muggle family, to point out this disparity in wizard culture.

Dobby's joy at being freed and the life he happily creates for himself counters the reaction the Hogwarts house-elves and Winky have towards freedom. The Hogwarts elves ignore Dobby and whisper about his pride as if it were something about which he should be ashamed. Dobby takes great pride in his work at Hogwarts and in his new service position as the only paid house-elf at Hogwarts. Yet the other house-elves view freedom as the ultimate betrayal of their way of life. They move away from him when he speaks of being paid for the work he does and view Dobby's payment as "rude and embarrassing" (*Goblet of Fire* 330). The "correct" stance towards freedom can be seen in Winky, the dismissed house elf. Barty Crouch gave her clothes because of insubordination (which she did not commit), and while Winky was placed with a family who was as psychologically abusive to her as the Malfoys were physically abusive to Dobby⁸, she does not view her freedom with pride. She is deeply ashamed of having failed at hiding the Death Eater within their house. Although she acquired the same position as Dobby at Hogwarts, she completely gives up. Instead of taking pride in her work like Dobby, she sits by the fire in the kitchens and drinks herself into a stupor. She has been stripped of her occupation and therefore her sole definition. Dobby takes his loss of family occupation to mean a redefinition of who he is and succeeds in creating a new life and attitude for himself. The two house-elves offer unique perspectives in how house-elves have been conditioned to view freedom.

Hermione, like Dobby, fights the house-elf prejudice in the wizarding world. Once Hermione forms S.P.E.W. to fight the proscribed prejudice, she is continually made fun of, particularly when Ron mocks her efforts out of proportion by calling her group the House-Elf Liberation Front. Ron insists that house-elves enjoy their positions and that a free house-elf would not know what to do with himself. Ron is so conditioned it takes three more years (Year

Four to Year Seven) for him to finally understand that house-elves were made to be free and wizards have enslaved them: “‘No,’ said Ron seriously, ‘I mean we should tell them to get out. We don’t want any more Dobbys, do we? We can’t order them to die for us—’” (*Deathly Hallows* 502). In this scene, Ron realizes that because the Hogwarts house-elves are bound to Hogwarts, they will likely die when Lord Voldemort and the Death Eaters finally enter the castle. In desiring to free the house-elves and help them escape, Ron realizes house-elves’ inherent independence and worth outside of wizards’ homes.

Dickens and Rowling use their servant characters, such as Esther and the house-elves Dobby and Winky, to show how deeply engrained and conditioned their societies are towards servants. Esther is thrown into a housekeeping position before she herself truly comprehends her social status. In Rowling’s story, house-elves are so conditioned to their role that they willingly punish themselves for insubordination their masters overlooked. However, there is hope. In having a member of such an old wizarding family have an epiphany over house-elf independence, Rowling gives her audience hope about the future of wizarding society and it takes two new members of society (Dobby and Hermione) to show the old families the error of their ways. In a similar way, Dickens gives his readers hope when Ada, Richard and Mr. Jarndyce take Esther in and love her, and when Alan Woodcourt dismisses her heritage and upbringing and marries her. Both authors work within the constraints their societies have on social status, but offer small glimpses of hope and acceptance within those barriers.

Contradictory Love

Given the societal constraints both authors work within, their characterizations of their most beloved characters show a great deal of contradiction. These conflicting characterizations can be seen most in Peggotty and Hagrid. These two characters act as the orphan hero’s constant

source of love. Despite the prominent role both these characters play in the protagonists' lives, they are some of the most stereotyped of all the characters. The authors give great detail to these prominent characters, yet because of the servile role they occupy, Dickens and Rowling allow these servant characters to be marginalized and stereotyped throughout their works.

David Copperfield's Peggotty remains a loving and grounded character throughout David's life even after she has stopped working for the Copperfields and Murdstones. She loves David with such vigor that her buttons pop off when she hugs him. Peggotty has a good rapport with her mistress as well. She has such a close relationship with Clara that she invites David to her brother's home for a fortnight and feels the liberty to tell Clara she believes she is making a mistake by marrying Mr. Murdstone. Peggotty is protective of the surrogate home she has with David and Clara. David feels the same amount of love for Peggotty, especially once his mother begins to withdraw. He writes,

From that night there grew up in my breast, a feeling for Peggotty, which I cannot very well define. She did not replace my mother; no one could do that; but she came into a vacancy in my heart, which closed upon her, and I felt towards her something I have never felt for any other human being. It was a sort of comical affection too; and yet if she had died, I cannot think what I should have done, or how I should have acted out the tragedy it would have been to me. (*David Copperfield* 62)

Peggotty becomes David's surrogate mother and he her surrogate child. David keeps a close, familial relationship with Peggotty long after she stops working for him.

Peggotty is such a rosy and loving character that there can be little doubt that she is a positive and influential character within the novel, yet on numerous occasions Dickens reminds his readers of her inferior place. Her face is so red that birds mistake her for apples, which suggests her connection to the natural world. Her fingers are as rough as "a pocket nutmeg-grater" (*David Copperfield* 24), which connotes her position as a worker. Although Dickens's intentions in describing Peggotty thusly are to give her character depth, the fact that her

characterizations are related to the natural world and service emphasize her primary position in the novel as a lower class worker because of the lower class tendency to work with the land. A young David cottons on to this implication by calling her a beast, which yet again emphasizes her worker-class status. In a tender moment between Clara, David, and Peggotty, Dickens reminds the reader of Peggotty's standing within the family. In this emotional scene, a very young David reminds Peggotty of her lower status within their family. She works for them and is therefore a beast of burden. In the following sentence, the elder narrator David calls her an "honest creature" (*David Copperfield* 30) and while the connotation of that phrase is meant to be endearing, we are yet again reminded that Peggotty's primary purpose within the Copperfield household is to work.

Hagrid, too, acts as a surrogate mother for Harry, which perhaps suggests a maternal role that servants play in their occupations. It is Hagrid who first tells Harry he is a wizard. Hagrid is the person who brings Harry into the wizarding world. In a type of symbolic birth, Hagrid takes Harry from the darkness that is living with the Dursleys, to the enlightenment of Harry's place in the world. It is also Hagrid who introduces Harry to his family by giving him a photo album of the Potters in Harry's first year at Hogwarts. Despite his faults, Hagrid plays a very protective and nurturing role in Harry's life. It is Hagrid who brings baby Harry safely to the Dursleys' doorstep in a flying motorcycle in the beginning of series, and who protects Harry in the same motorcycle when the protective charm over Harry breaks in *The Deathly Hallows*. In the seventh book, Hagrid is the one who carries the body of Harry back to Hogwarts. Rowling recalls Hagrid's maternal relationship to Harry as she writes, "the enormous hands that lifted him into the air were exceedingly gentle. Harry could feel Hagrid's arms trembling with the force of his heavy sobs, great tears splashed down upon him as Hagrid cradled Harry in his arms" (*Deathly*

Hallows 582). The affection that Rowling has for the character of Hagrid is palpable, but while she writes him as being one of the most important people in Harry's lives, she belittles him also.

Hagrid is the most prominent lower-class character in the *Harry Potter* series, yet Rowling undeniably writes him as a fool at times. We learn early on that Hagrid was expelled from Hogwarts and his wand was snapped. All that is left of his wand he hides in a ridiculous pink umbrella, which not only criminalizes him for keeping his wand after his right to perform magic was taken from him, but it ridicules and even feminizes him because of its color. He allows his emotions to control him, particularly when dealing with dangerous magical creatures like Norbert the dragon and Buckbeak the hippogriff, whom Hagrid wants to nurture and raise. When it comes to his affection for magical creatures, Hagrid is blind to the danger, risking his own job, his life and the lives of others. Despite this fact, his knowledge of magical creatures and fierce loyalty to Dumbledore help him become Professor of the Care of Magical Creatures at Hogwarts.

Unfortunately, Hagrid is by far the least favorite of the professors at Hogwarts and one of the least capable, second only to Professor Binns, the History of Magic Professor who has little concern for how exciting his lectures are and does not even know his students' names⁹. Although Hagrid's lessons are innovative, and Dumbledore undoubtedly trusts Hagrid and sees his potential, for most students his clumsy, nervous demeanor and the ferocity of the animals in his lessons outweigh the aforementioned positive attributes. The following conversation between Ron, Hermione, and Harry illustrates this point:

"But he can't really think we'd continue Care of Magical Creatures!" she said, looking distressed. "I mean when has any of us expressed...you know...any enthusiasm?"

"That's it, though, innit?" said Ron, swallowing an entire fried egg whole. "We were the ones who made the most effort in classes because we like Hagrid. But he thinks we like the stupid *subject*. D'you reckon anyone's going to go on to N.E.W.T.?"

Neither Harry nor Hermione answered; there was no need. They knew perfectly well

that nobody in their year would want to continue Care of Magical Creatures. (*Half-Blood Prince* 164)

Despite all of the positive, endearing traits Rowling attributes to Hagrid, and the important role he plays in regards to Harry, Rowling emphasizes the faults that emerge from his lower class origins and forces him to only be good at serving others as the Groundskeeper.

Through the characters of Peggotty and Hagrid, Dickens and Rowling show how close servants can be to the families they serve. The characters, authors, and audiences have great affection for Peggotty and Hagrid and they are extremely important to David and Harry during their tales. However, Dickens and Rowling remind their readers of their social position by emphasizing their connection to animals and to service. Peggotty and Hagrid may have a great deal of their readers' sympathies, but they remain in their servant positions throughout their respective novels.

The Service of the Other

Dickens and Rowling both use their servant characters in conflicting and contradictory ways. They work delicately to shed positive light on their lower class characters without dismantling the systems they work within, whether it be Victorian England or the wizarding world. No better do we see this delicate work than in the characters of Jo, Nancy, and Dobby, and the sacrifices they made for their protagonists.

The sacrifice *Bleak House's* Jo gives to the story is more metaphorical than literal. Jo is a truly innocent and ignorant character in the novel and he never willingly sacrifices his life for the betterment of others, unlike Nancy and Dobby. However, Jo's existence in *Bleak House* is paramount to the novel's movement and denouement. Jo's life is the bleakest of all in *Bleak House* and while he remains almost anonymous, his life touches all characters in the novel. Jo is

one of Dickens's most pathetic orphan characters. He is first introduced during the inquisition into the death of the anonymous law writer Nemo:

Name, Jo. Nothing else that he knows on. Don't know that everybody has two names. Never heard of sich a think. Don't know that Jo is short for a longer name. Thinks its long enough for *him*.—*He* don't find no fault with it. Spell it? No. *He* can't spell it. No father, no mother, no friends. Never been to school. What's home? Knows a broom's a broom, and knows it's wicked to tell a lie. Don't recollect who told him about the broom, or about the lie, but knows both. Can't exactly say what'll be done to him arter he's dead if he tells a lie to the gentlemen here, but believes it'll be something wery bad to punish him, and serve him right—and so he'll tell the truth. (*Bleak House* 177)

It is here that we are introduced to the idea of Jo as the embodiment of pure innocence. He lacks family and education, and yet he implicitly understands good from evil. It is Jo's pure innocence that makes him such a powerful character in spite of his poverty. Jo maintains a moral center. He does not succumb to thievery like many of Dickens's orphans do, such as in *Oliver Twist*. He does what he can to survive and he does what he is told by superiors like Inspector Bucket and Mr. Tulkinghorn. His most moving action occurs when he hears he has unintentionally infected Esther with small pox. His ignorance that illness passes from person to person regardless of their best intentions and his thinking that an apology note in "uncommon precious large" (*Bleak House* 731) handwriting will make his apology more sincere touch at the very heart of Jo. The fact that his last act in the world was an apology for something that was never his fault makes Jo one of the novel's most morally upstanding characters. His heart is always set on others.

His poverty shackles him, yet he is a character without restraints in the plot of the novel. He seems to transcend his social status or an orphaned street sweeper, and lies at the center of a complex web of character connections. He brings major characters together and is key in the turning of the plot multiple times throughout the novel. The plot of the novel falls on his shoulders unbeknownst to him. Jo shows the truly complex narrative structure of the novel. In life, he holds a staggering amount of important narrative threads. He connects Esther to her

mother, Lady Dedlock, and to her father, Captain Hawdon. Because he showed Lady Dedlock Nemo's life, he identified her clothes on Hortense, which played a two-fold discovery. It helped Mr. Tulkinghorn and Inspector Bucket realize Lady Dedlock was Esther's mother and that Hortense was Mr. Tulkinghorn's murderess. His friendship with Charley brought him to Bleak House and to safety for one night, which foreshadowed Esther's connection to Lady Dedlock, made Esther sick (which in turn revealed Esther's strength and her love for Alan Woodcourt), and showed Mr. Skimpole in his true light as he accepted money from Inspector Bucket to force an ill Jo from Bleak House.

Jo's death moves the narrative on even more. Alan Woodcourt finds Jo with Jenny in Tom-All-Alones and from there they find him a safe place to die. His friendship to Jenny links us to the climax of the novel as Esther and Inspector Bucket search for Lady Dedlock. Lady Dedlock knew that Jenny briefly met her daughter and had taken Esther's handkerchief. On her death walk, Lady Dedlock stops at Jenny's house and the two plot to throw anyone following her off her trail. By swapping clothes with Jenny and delaying Inspector Bucket, Esther does not reach her mother in time to save her. Secondly, in Jo's final conversation with Mr. Snagsby he says he saw Alan Woodcourt shed tears when Jo mentioned he was the one who got poor Esther sick. This is crucial to the denouement of the novel, as we realize Alan loves Esther just as much as she loves him.

In his book *Charles Dickens: Resurrectionist*, Andrew Sanders points out, "Jo, living and dying, is integral to the overall scheme of the novel, and to its complex thematic development; if disease, ignorance, and death are inherent in the confused world described in the story, the light that glows around the dying boy suggests that the darkness *can* be overcome" (Sanders 157). In life and death Jo affects and changes the plot and characters in ways that only the reader and

Dickens understand. His death is a sacrifice for the plot of the novel and the rest of the characters. Although his connections to everyone in the novel are seen by very few, save Inspector Bucket and Mr. Tulkinghorn, the novel would not have been constructed and resolved itself in the same way had Jo not have lived and died.

Nancy from *Oliver Twist* continues the theme of the lower class making sacrifices for the upper class. Like Jo, Nancy's actions help direct the conclusion of the plot. Nancy lives embedded in the midst of the lower class. She makes references to Fagin having helped raise her in her youth and introduced her to her life of crime. She is coupled with the villain Bill Sikes and it can be assumed that she is a prostitute, although Dickens never states that fact outright. For all intents and purposes, Nancy should be a reprehensible character just like her compatriots; however, Dickens refutes this view by making Nancy one of the most morally upright characters in the entire novel. Contrary to the reputation surrounding her occupation, she knows the difference between right and wrong and pursues it to her death. Nancy knows who and what she is in the grand scheme of the world. When she meets Rose Maylie for the first time, she gives a stark account of the nature of her life:

"I, lady!" replied the girl. "I am the infamous creature you have heard of, that lives among the thieves, and that never from the first moment I can recollect my eyes and senses opening on London streets have known any better life, or kinder words than they have given me, so help me God! Do not mind shrinking openly from me, lady. I am younger than you would think, to look at me, but I am well used to it. The poorest women fall back, as I make my way along the crowded pavement."

"What dreadful things are these!" said Rose, involuntarily falling from her strange companion.

"Thank Heaven upon your knees, dear lady," cried the girl, "that you had friends to care for and keep you in your childhood, and that you were never in the midst of cold and hunger, and riot and drunkenness, and—and—something worse than all—as I have been from my cradle; I may use the word, for the alley and the gutter were mine, as they will be my deathbed." (*Oliver Twist* 252)

Here, Nancy clearly understands the facts of her life and how easily they could have been

overturned had she been born in better circumstances. It is in this passage that the reader sees her motives for helping Oliver. When Nancy overheard that Oliver is the younger brother of the villain Monk and has a life and an inheritance, she is determined in seeing Oliver's life turned around. The gutter will not be Oliver's deathbed, and Nancy will die trying to make sure Oliver is returned to his original life.

However, Nancy's stance towards saving Oliver is complicated by her relationships with Sikes and Fagin. She wishes to protect Oliver, and Sikes and Fagin. She believes she can do both, despite the fact that Sikes and Fagin believe that if Oliver is returned, they will fall into ruin. The mission she places upon herself is a delicate balance. She tells Rose, "... besides, bad life as he has led, I have led a bad life too; there are many of us who have kept the same courses together, and I'll not turn upon them, who might—any of them—have turned upon me, but didn't, bad as they are" (*Oliver Twist* 293). She refuses to incriminate her loved ones and rejects Mr. Brownlow's offer of rescue from her life. She denies the offer of leaving her family, her life, and her social class. She says, "'I am chained to my old life. I loathe and hate it now, but I cannot leave it'" (*Oliver Twist* 295). Although her life and family are abhorrent, she refuses to leave them. In doing so she confirms her lower class position in society and sets her fate.

Knowing her potential fate, Nancy acts out to save Oliver. She sacrifices her own life in saving him. Fagin has Nancy followed by Noah Claypole when she meets with Mr. Brownlow and Rose. Although Noah correctly reports back that Nancy refuses to incriminate them, Fagin does not tell Sikes this vital piece of information. Nancy is betrayed by the man she tried to protect. In a violent fury, Sikes beats Nancy to death. Dickens writes,

She staggered and fell: nearly blinded with the blood that rained down from a deep gash in her forehead; but raising herself, with difficulty, on her knees, drew from her bosom a white handkerchief—Rose Maylie's own—and holding it up, in her folded hands, as high towards Heaven as her feeble strength would allow, breathed one prayer for mercy to her

Maker. (*Oliver Twist* 302)

In her final moments, Nancy raises a white flag. She does so to surrender to her fate, to surrender to Bill's fury, and as an important reminder of the purity with which she entered this fate. Her intentions were good. She only meant to save an innocent boy and leave those with "blood on their hands", so to say, unharmed. Although she thought she might have to sacrifice some part of herself in the process, she never intended any harm done to her loved ones. Her last thoughts are a prayer for mercy to God, and the reader hopes that in death she receives the mercy she never had in life. In sacrificing her life, she truly accepts her role as a servant in society; she transcends the role of a prostitute into a service position of more moral integrity and worth, and in doing so ensures the protagonist's safety and prosperity. With the characters of Jo and Nancy, Dickens reveals how those in service positions can have a greater purpose and offer a greater service to those above them. In having lower class characters sacrifice themselves for the greater good of the novel and the society within which they exist, Dickens shows the lower class's imperative position in society.

Rowling follows Dickens in demonstrating the importance of the servant beyond their occupation. Dobby is first introduced in *The Chamber of Secrets* as the house-elf enslaved to the Malfoy family. From his introduction in the series onwards, Dobby shows extreme loyalty to Harry. In *The Chamber of Secrets*, he attempts to save Harry's life by hindering the boy's return to Hogwarts. Dobby steals Harry's mail, drops Aunt Petunia's sugared violet pudding during a dinner party, uses magic in the Dursley household in an attempt to get him expelled, and bewitches a Bludger to attack him on the Quiddich pitch¹⁰. He does so not because he was ordered to, but because he feels intense loyalty to Harry whom he has never met. Dobby breaks many house-elf rules to stop Harry from returning to Hogwarts where the Chamber of Secrets

will be opened. Ultimately, Dobby tries to save Harry's life. At the end of Book Two, Harry helps free Dobby from the Malfoys. He stuffs his sweaty sock into Tom Riddle's diary and returns it to Lucius Malfoy. Lucius throws the sock from the diary and Dobby catches it, earning his freedom. From that moment on, Dobby's loyalty to Harry is unfailing. Dobby yet again saves Harry's life during the TriWizard Tournament by giving him gillyweed to breathe underwater on the morning of the second task. Since being freed, Dobby continues to work in service to wizards by working for Hogwarts. He is no longer magically tied to any wizard family, but he voluntarily ties himself to Harry because of the kindness Harry showed him.

Dobby's true service to Harry occurs in the seventh book. When Harry and his group of followers are trapped in the Malfoys' dungeon awaiting Lord Voldemort's arrival and their imminent death, Dobby appears. His superior magic penetrates the spells surrounding the Malfoys' house, allowing him to save Harry and his friends. Dobby's power is palpable in his last moments alive:

The tiny elf trotted into the room, his shaking finger pointing at his old mistress.

"You must not hurt Harry Potter," he squeaked.

"Kill him, Cissy!" shrieked Bellatrix, but there was another loud *crack*, and Narcissa's wand, too, flew into the air and landed on the other side of the room.

"You dirty little monkey!" bawled Bellatrix. "How dare you take a witch's wand, how dare you defy your masters?"

"Dobby has no master!" squealed the elf. "Dobby is a free elf, and Dobby has come to save Harry Potter and his friends!" (*Deathly Hallows* 384)

In his last moments, Dobby defies those who enslaved him. Even through his small stature and squeaky voice, Dobby has complete control in a situation that a full-grown wizard, five teenage wizards, and a goblin could not escape. In a moment of deep distress, Harry calls out for help, and Aberforth Dumbledore sends the only person he can trust—Dobby. If not for Dobby's unfaltering loyalty and bravery, Lord Voldemort would have undoubtedly killed Harry that evening. As he dies, Dobby stretches out his hands in supplication to Harry and Harry's name

are his last words.

Dobby's position in life was to serve others. He was bound to serve a family for life. Once freed, Dobby's purpose was to serve the wizard he loved. Harry and his friends understand Dobby's life of service and sacrifice. As a final act of thanks to Dobby, they serve him in death. Harry, Ron, and Dean dig Dobby's grave by hand and dress him in their clothes—a fact that would have made Dobby weep with joy—and they thank him for saving them. Through the years, Harry gave Dobby gifts of mismatched, gaudy socks as thanks for saving him multiple times. Harry's final gift to Dobby is to carve into his headstone: "Here lies Dobby, a free Elf" (*Deathly Hallows* 389). Just as Nancy sacrifices her life for Oliver, Dobby sacrifices his to protect Harry by jumping in front of the knife that Bellatrix throws. In a similar way that Nancy received the mercy in death that she did not receive in life, Dobby is given true emancipation from those who enslaved him. In his final moments, he serves the one he loves and displays his true freedom and power.

Dickens and Rowling make very sure that their readers not only feel great affection for their servant characters, but also that they realize their importance to the narrative outside of their occupation. Dickens and Rowling write sympathetic and sacrificing characters like Jo, Nancy, and Dobby to make their readers rethink the importance of those beneath them (assuming that Rowling's readership is mostly middle class, as Dickens's audience was). Both authors allow their readers to see the lower class in their novels the way that society sees them. They chain them to their roles, they parody them, and stereotype them. However, they also cherish them, nurture them, and make them self-sacrificing heroes in their social-problem novels.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Woman

Women lie on the periphery of Victorian and wizarding society and are the final catalysts for social change. In Victorian England women were considered citizens second to men. They relied upon men to support them and only in rare instances were they able to provide for themselves. The poorer the woman, the more advanced her second-class status became.

Although women are more independent in the wizarding world, much of the same can be said of their status. Witches are more integrated in wizarding society and hold powerful positions, but powerful men always accompany powerful women (e.g., Dolores Umbridge and the Minister of Magic, Bellatrix Lestrange and Lord Voldemort). Women are seen as peripheral characters in both Dickens and Rowling's works for the roles they fill in society, but both authors play with the power they possess. Both authors write women as objects to be desired by the protagonists, as the quintessential Victorian angel in the house, and as characters with a great deal of authorial power within the text. This chapter will look at how Dickens and Rowling place women on the periphery of their societies. Each section will follow the progression of power that women have within their stories, beginning with the least amount of power as passive love interests, and building from there to show that Dickens and Rowling give their women power, but in very subversive ways.

Love Interests

The majority of the young women within both Dickens and Rowling's works are used to serve a romantic purpose. Their female characters often become passive objects to be enlivened when it is time for the hero to fall in love. This utilization can be seen in Dickens with Dora and Agnes, and in Rowling with Cho and Ginny. This argument is primarily based off of Gwendolyn Limbach's work "Ginny Weasley, Girl Next-Door?" which focuses on Rowling's use of

Ginny and Cho in the series. The arguments Limbach makes closely parallels Dickens's use of Agnes and Dora in *David Copperfield*. Both authors write strong independent characters and then confine them to being the passive love interest.

Limbach begins her argument with pointing out the discrepancies that exist within the characterization of Ginny Weasley. Limbach writes,

Among the female characters in her age group, Ginny Weasley is one of the stronger girls we encounter throughout the *Harry Potter* series; however, her role as Harry's future and actual love interest limits her development...Ginny has shown herself to be a powerful witch, yet that power to fight is secondary, as in many gender-role-enforcing narratives, to her destiny to marry. (167)

Rowling introduces her readers to Ginny long before she begins to develop her. She remains the incredibly shy girl with a crush on Harry for five books, even after her harrowing experience in the Chamber of Secrets. It is not until *The Order of the Phoenix* that Rowling allows Ginny to be someone other than the sister of Ron. Once Rowling begins to develop her, she becomes a funny, smart independent girl who can hold her own in a family of all boys and on the Quidditch pitch. Limbach writes, "Though Ginny has proven herself to be an active fighter and vivacious character, her appearance in the books, and her fate in the series, seem to be solely at Harry's discretion" (179). Rowling makes Ginny an incredibly powerful character, but it is not until Harry sees Ginny that we make note of the once shy Weasley girl.

The same can be said of *David Copperfield*'s Agnes Wickfield. Agnes is a timid girl with a great deal of quiet strength. Dickens first introduces her as a child with an incredible amount of responsibility on her shoulders. Although she is young, she is the housekeeper and caretaker of her father. David describes her character well by saying, "Although her face was quite bright and happy, there was a tranquility about it, and about her—a quiet, good, calm spirit—that I never have forgotten; that I never shall forget" (*David Copperfield* 194). Agnes is

a continual calming presence in his life. Like Harry and Ginny, David matures with Agnes. Agnes stays with David wherever he goes, whether in person or in his thoughts. Yet it takes David years to see Agnes the way Dickens's audience sees her. From her introduction onwards, Dickens makes certain that his readers understand Agnes is the woman David should love. David, on the other hand, does not see Agnes in the role of his wife until much later. Limbach explains the blindness of the protagonists by saying, "Rather than enabling Ginny to be an active agent of her desire for Harry, the author forces her to maintain an object position until the hero is ready to pursue her... To wit, Ginny only becomes a prominent character in the series when Harry sexually matures and gains experience through Cho Chang" (Limbach 179). Both Dickens and Rowling block the path to Agnes and Ginny and remove it once they have matured enough and have experienced relationships.

Love triangles form in both works¹¹. In *David Copperfield*, David is coupled first with Dora before he realizes his feelings for Agnes. In *Harry Potter*, Harry dates Cho before he recognizes Ginny as a love interest. David and Harry must prevail over their first loves, Dora and Cho, before they can reach their true loves Agnes and Ginny. Limbach points out that Rowling pairs Cho and Ginny—wherever one is, the other is close to follow: "Cho acts as a foil to Ginny" (Limbach 175). The same can be said for Dora and Agnes. Agnes only seems to point the flaws within Dora, just as Limbach notes that, "In almost every instance of their pairing in the book [*Order of the Phoenix*], Ginny is portrayed in a better light than Cho" (Limbach 175). Agnes and Ginny bring out the flaws in Dora and Cho. Dora is seen as overly emotional, unorganized, and childish when placed next to the mature, strong, and intelligent Agnes. When Cho loses her temper while training with Dumbledore's Army, Ginny keeps her cool. Dickens and Rowling silently compare the lesser women (Cho and Dora) to the better women (Ginny and

Agnes) and naturally allow the better women to triumph. However, both authors obscure the path to the better women.

When Dickens and Rowling introduce Dora and Cho to their readers, the women are seen in an exciting, dream-like state. The excitement David and Harry feel is felt by the reader because Dickens and Rowling have already created sympathetic readers. These sympathetic readers want to follow their orphan protagonists and so will believe the dream even though they know Agnes is the one for David and that Cho is not the right girl for Harry. In her article “*David Copperfield* and the Pursuit of Happiness” Annette R. Federico explains the journey both David and the reader take when introduced to Dora:

David’s love for Dora and his dreamy rapture represent the possibility of real passion, and passion (even foolish passion) is essential to Dickens’s concept of happiness. He wants to recover the tumultuous, wretched joy of being in love because that happiness is simply so vivid and palpable, even if, paradoxically, it can only be described as unreal. (Federico 82)

David describes his wedding day as a dream. Harry experiences a similar disbelief when he and Cho kiss for the first time. “His brain seemed to have been Stunned” (*Order of the Phoenix* 403) writes Rowling. As Harry walks back to the Gryffindor common room, he remains in a state of disbelief and does not seem fully present to what is going on around him and the questions Ron and Hermione ask him. While the reader expects their protagonists to be fuzzyheaded when they fall in love, this dream-like state does not exist when either David or Harry fall in love with their true intendeds. Their second courtships seem rooted in reality and almost lack the butterflies seen in their first loves.

Dickens and Rowling use their protagonists’ first loves as experience and as characters to move the plot along. Their development is stunted, particularly after they have served their purpose. Dora is no longer of any use so she dies, and Cho is pushed back to the Ravenclaw

common room and is rarely heard of again. David and Harry learn from Dora and Cho in order to move on to the final point in their love triangle. Yet again, Dickens and Rowling use these four female characters as objects for their protagonists.

Ginny and Agnes are characterized with an ethereal light. While a dream-like state accompanies the beginning of the protagonists' relationships with Cho and Dora, an ethereal quality accompanies Agnes and Ginny in the characters themselves. When David first meets Agnes, he sees her at the top of a staircase and he keeps that memory with him:

I cannot call to mind where or when, in my childhood, I had seen a stained glass window in a church. Nor do I recollect its subject. But I know that when I saw her turn round, in the grave light of the old staircase, and wait for us, above, I thought of that window; and that I associated something of its tranquil brightness with Agnes Wickfield ever afterwards. (*David Copperfield* 194)

Agnes is the calming spirit David needs in his life. When he drinks too much and makes a fool of himself at the theater, it is Agnes who tells him to go home. She soothes his embarrassment at being a drunken idiot: "She put her hand—its touch was like no other hand—upon my arm for a moment; and I felt so befriended and comforted" (*David Copperfield* 311). She provides him with the education he needs and warns him about Steerforth's influence in his life. She is his moral compass.

Ginny acts in the same way for Harry. Limbach mentions that, "Harry fashions Ginny into the personification of peace time and normalcy" (Limbach 167) especially in *The Deathly Hallows* when Harry is hiding in the woods with Hermione and Ron. In the height of his despair, after Ron had left them in the woods, Harry uses the Marauder's Map to look for Ginny and find comfort. Rowling writes, "Harry found himself taking it out simply to stare at Ginny's name in the girls' dormitory, wondering whether the intensity with which he gazed at it might break into her sleep, that she would somehow know he was thinking about her, hoping that she was all

right” (*Deathly Hallows* 256). While Harry is in the forest hiding, Ginny is taking charge in the resistance at Hogwarts, along with Neville. However, we do not get to see much of Ginny’s rebellion. Rowling allows her to have a massive amount of ingenuity and bravery, but it is behind the real action of the novel. The reader’s focus is on Harry, not Ginny. Therefore, Ginny’s real purpose at this point in the novel is as a comforter to Harry. Hearing of her acts of insurgency motivates Harry in his quest. Earlier in their relationship, Ginny acts as a confidant, like Agnes. When Harry is at the pinnacle of his anger and stubbornness after dreaming he was the snake that attacked Mr. Weasley in *The Order of the Phoenix*, Ginny is the one who makes him realize his mistakes. Ginny confronts Harry on not wanting to talk to any of his friends saying, “‘Well, that was a bit stupid of you,’ said Ginny angrily, ‘seeing as you don’t know anyone but me who’s been possessed by You-Know-Who, and I can tell you how it feels’” (*Order of the Phoenix* 441) and she helps him realize he is not possessed and relieves his anxieties in the same way that Agnes lets David know when he is foolish, but cares for him nevertheless.

While both Agnes and Ginny act as comforters to their loves, at one point in their development Dickens and Rowling subject them to the most clichéd use of women—they must become damsels in distress. Agnes and Ginny must become the passive object in their tales and David and Harry must become the “active agent of rescue” (Limbach 170) for their heroine. The villain of *David Copperfield* is the slimy Uriah Heep and his dream of marrying Agnes threatens to ruin the life and home Mr. Wickfield has created. Mr. Wickfield has become a drunk, completely passive in the state of his affairs and evil Uriah Heep has taken over his household and threatens to marry poor Agnes. While David knows of Uriah’s plan, he does nothing to stop it and his fury is impotent. In the end, it is Tommy Traddles who saves Agnes from her fate and

ruins Uriah. Yet, both Uriah and the novel seem to find David to be the savior of Agnes. While Mr. Micawber reads the charges against Uriah and Tommy confronts him, Uriah focuses all of his rage at David even though David acts as a silent witness. Regardless of who the real savior is, Dickens writes Agnes as a woman in need of saving.

Rowling places Ginny in a similar position in *The Chamber of Secrets*. Lord Voldemort possesses her through the persona he hid in his school diary when he was known as Tom Riddle. Ginny becomes a complete passive object in this book. Limbach explains:

Yet being the passive object of rescue is what Ginny has been set up to do throughout the book. When possessed by Riddle, Ginny (or rather, her body) must passively carry out his bidding; Ginny also remains silent throughout her ordeal [sic] and is silenced when she does try to ask for help. It should come as no surprise that, when Harry enters the Chamber of Secrets to rescue her, Ginny is unconscious. (Limbach 170)

In Rowling's version of the damsel in distress, Harry is a more classic hero to the distressed damsel Ginny than David was to Agnes. He saves Ginny and in doing so prolongs Lord Voldemort's return, an event that could not have been stopped had it not been for Ginny, thereby making her yet another passive vehicle for Harry.

Annette Federico describes the reader's sympathetic response to David's life and marriage by writing, "Perhaps it is the liberal reader's involvement in the hero's quest for happiness, the familiarity of his yearnings and hopes—the notion of never giving up until you get it right—that contributes to *David Copperfield*'s ongoing status as the best-loved, the most bittersweet of all of Dickens's novels" (Federico 92). Dickens's readers are left with a palpable bittersweet feeling at the end of *David Copperfield*. David and Agnes are happily married with children pleasantly running around the house, and yet there is a sense of loss and wanting. David's last lines are focused on Agnes: "O Agnes, O my soul, so may thy face be to me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me like the shadows which I now

dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward!” (*David Copperfield* 729). His marriage with Agnes was supposed to be the pinnacle of his life. Agnes would be the vehicle to a happy life, and yet it feels as if the height of his life was *pursuing* Agnes. Now that Agnes has been won, David seems resigned to his life, not invigorated, as the reader would hope.

The same bittersweet and best-loved novel connotations follow for Rowling’s series, although it is her only body of work thus far. Harry Potter has become a well-loved name in the ten years it took to publish the series and the ending is just as bittersweet as David’s ending. Harry’s problems are over: “The scar had not pained Harry for nineteen years. All was well.” (*Deathly Hallows* 607). He and Ginny appear to have not told their children about his role in destroying Lord Voldemort, which seems to make the work Harry did in the prior seven novels insignificant. Harry’s main role now is as husband and father, all of which depend upon his wife Ginny, and her main priority is being a mother. All of the lines Rowling gives her placate her children and husband and she is yet again portrayed as a passive vehicle.

The character of Ginny offers proof that Rowling uses her love interest in the same way that Dickens uses his. Ginny and Agnes are almost mirror images of one another, the only difference being the intensity and bravery that accompanies fiery Ginny, which is understandable given that Rowling writes her love interest two hundred years after Dickens and women’s independence is expected with Rowling’s contemporary audience. Agnes and Ginny are extremely passive characters. They are there to help nurture and comfort their protagonist loves in their journeys. As Limbach writes, “By using a narrative trope that reduces female characters to property traded between men without attempting to rewrite said trope, Rowling reinscribes dominant cultural traditions of the exchange of passive women between men” (Limbach 179). Dickens and Rowling develop Agnes and Ginny to the point of passivity. They are characterized

as somewhat independent characters until David and Harry are sexually interested in them. Then they are developed for what they can give to Harry and David. The reader feels happiness towards their marriages, but then is left wanting more because both Dickens and Rowling forget to develop Agnes and Ginny after they were married. Dickens and Rowling relegate Agnes and Ginny to a passive life once they have served their purpose to their protagonists.

Angels in the House

A common theme in Victorian novels is that of the angel in the house. This idea came from Coventry Patmore's poem "The Angel in the House" which showed the ideal characterization of a Victorian woman. From there the idea of the angel in the house took root, particularly in Victorian literature. This section will discuss the iconic angel in the house within Dickens and Rowling's novels and what Elizabeth Langland calls "nobody's angels" in her article "Nobody's Angels: Domestic Ideology and Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Novel".

The angel in the house represents the ideal woman of early nineteenth-century England. In her article "Late-Twentieth-Century Readers in Search of a Dickensian Heroine: Angels, Fallen Sisters, and Eccentric Women", critic Catherine J. Golden typifies the angel in the house as a woman with "patience, unselfishness, earnestness, faithfulness, and devotion" (Golden 6). These are all important qualities in the angel, but another vital trait is being passive in their roles as angels. This chapter has already discussed angels in both Dickens and Rowling's works without naming them as such when Agnes and Ginny's roles as love interests were discussed. More angels remain, particularly in Dickens's works: *Bleak House*'s Esther and Rose Maylie from *Oliver Twist* also shine as his angelic women. Compassionate and quiet Esther happily works in the environment in which she is placed and says nothing to harm or offend anyone,

even within the secrecy of her own narrative. Golden notes that Rose Maylie's angel status comes to light particularly when paired with the novel's fallen woman Nancy (12). Oliver describes Rose well when he cries, "'Oh! consider how young and good she is, and what pleasure and comfort she gives to all about her'" (*Oliver Twist* 202). Although she has yet to be in charge of her own household, Rose is the angelic protector of Oliver. Together Esther and Rose fulfill the definition Golden gives the angel in the house, using Patmore's poem as reference. They are pure, steadfast, and innocent, and it is impossible to view them as otherwise.

Langland further explores the angel in the house. Her article focuses on what characteristics make a good angel and what do not. Most notably, she points out the importance of keys in the angel's persona being that "the central task of the Victorian angel was the management of her servant(s)" (Langland 295). Once Langland notes this trait, keys that were once invisible become very visible. She writes, "Esther Summerson in Dickens's *Bleak House* perpetually jingles hers; David Copperfield's mother signals her weakness by relinquishing her keys to Miss Murdstone, and Dora Copperfield announces her failure by conceiving keys as a toy" (Langland 295). Dickens's first description of Agnes has her "little basket-trifle hanging at her side, with keys in it" (*David Copperfield* 194). Dickens used house keys as his main symbol of the angel in the house, and as Langland points out the keys symbolize another thing that is often overlooked by Dickens himself and in the modern reading of them.

Keys represent a hidden power that lies very close to the center of Victorian life. A good housewife, a good keeper of the keys,¹² controlled the entire household and bridged the gap between the middle class family and the lower class servants. Not only did she have to manage the house and the finances, a job that Dora did so abysmally, but "the middle-class Victorian woman, much more than the man, found herself interacting with the servants and regulating their

behavior in the interest of maintaining middle-class control,” writes Langland (295). Although Dora failed at being a good angel in the house, her story gives readers a clear idea of what work the Victorian woman actually had to do. Langland writes,

Dickens is one of the few authors to depict the household angel amid domestic chaos—thieving, unruly servants, ‘skirmishing plates’ and ‘wandering vegetable dishes and mugs’...Dora’s default allows us to glimpse the functions performed by women in furthering middle-class control through class containment and status display. (298).

As evidenced by David’s marriage to Dora, the wife kept the reputation of the husband and family name. Dora emasculates David by being an inept housekeeper and forcing him to take over the control of the house. Langland calls this new interpretation of the angel in the house “nobody’s angel” because it emphasizes the woman’s power in her role and “challenges more traditional critical analyses of women’s place in Victorian society and requires revision of our notions of gender and agency” (Langland 303). Suddenly the angel in the house is reinterpreted and given a broader, more assertive role.

Given Langland’s new definition of the angel, Rowling’s work opens itself up to examples of the angel in the house: Hermione, Mrs. Weasley, and Professor McGonagall now become the re-envisioned Dickensian angels in the house. In this new perspective of the angel in the house, the angel takes on a more forceful, protective role. Rose Maylie, while being extremely protective of young Oliver, was very passive in her protection and required others like Mr. Brownlow and Nancy to help her protect him. On the other hand, Hermione Granger exemplifies the power Langland speaks of in her article. She is assertive in her relationships, incredibly intelligent and bossy all while maintaining the earnestness and devotion that Patmore denotes as qualities of an angel in the house. She continually protects Harry and Ron throughout their friendship whether they appreciate it or not. In the third book, *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, Rowling gives Hermione more assertiveness in how she protects her Hogwarts family. In the

beginning of her third year, Dumbledore gives Hermione a time turner because she is an exceptional student and wishes to take full advantage of her education. With her time turner she is able to take more classes, even if they are scheduled at the same time. It is a secret she and Dumbledore keep until the end of the year when the heroes most need saving. Rowling emphasizes the power Hermione holds when Dumbledore tells her, ““If all goes well, you will be able to save more than one innocent life tonight,”” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 288). Up until now Hermione’s protective power of being a know-it-all has only protected her close friends, but now, her vast intelligence is the key to her saving more than the lives of her friends, as she saves Buckbeak and Sirius Black that night. Hermione continues her protective, independent streak throughout the series as she fights for house-elf rights, and helps Harry survive in the woods by placing all the protective charms around their tent every time they move.

Mrs. Weasley is another strong, independent angel in the house. Mrs. Weasley could be considered a traditional Dickensian angel if it were not for her fiery spirit. She looks after her children and the household, just like her daughter Ginny does when she has a family, but Rowling allows glimpses into the fiery temper and the control Mrs. Weasley has in her house. From our first introduction to her on Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$, Molly Weasley has been a protecting, caring mother. She cares in small ways like giving homemade sweaters and treats to her children and Harry at Christmas, and in big ways like yelling at them when they take the flying Ford Anglia out for a ride, and sending them Howlers when they have stepped out of line at Hogwarts. She is strict, yet loving. She makes Harry a part of their family immediately and steps into the role as his mother when needed. The love she has for her family is evident, particularly when a boggart overpowers her at Grimmauld Place and shows her the dead bodies of all the members of her

family. Her desire to protect those she loves culminates in her finest moment in the series as she battles the evil Bellatrix Lestrange:

“NOT MY DAUGHTER, YOU BITCH!”

Mrs. Weasley threw off her cloak as she ran, freeing her arms. Bellatrix spun on the spot, roaring with laughter at the sight of her new challenge.

“OUT OF MY WAY!” shouted Mrs. Weasley to the three girls, and with a swipe of her wand she began to duel. Harry watched with terror and elation as Molly Weasley’s wand slashed and twirled, and Bellatrix Lestrange’s smile faltered, and became a snarl....

“No!” Mrs. Weasley cried, as a few students ran forwards, trying to come to her aid.

“Get back! *Get back!* She is mine!”...

“You—will—never—touch—our—children—again!” screamed Mrs. Weasley....

Molly’s curse soared beneath Bellatrix’s outstretched arm and hit her squarely in the chest, directly over her heart.

Bellatrix’s gloating smile froze, her eyes seemed to bulge: for the tiniest space of time she knew what had happened, and then she toppled, and the watching crowd roared, and Voldemort screamed. (*Deathly Hallows* 589-90)

This lengthy passage illuminates the power beneath the kind, soft exterior of Mrs. Weasley. Her children understood and feared her anger, but no one else did. In this moment, Molly Weasley demonstrates her real protective power. She demonstrates her power so aggressively that she kills one of the most evil of Lord Voldemort’s Death Eaters and elicits a scream of horror from him. Molly Weasley is a perfect example of the angel over the hearth of the house and the powerful agency Langland notices within said angels.

Professor McGonagall is the final angel of note in Rowling’s work. Interestingly, she can easily be paired with *David Copperfield*’s Betsey Trotwood¹³. The two women, though older, take great care of their homes and families. Professor McGonagall’s family is relegated to the confines of Hogwarts, and she and Professor Dumbledore act as mother and father figures for Harry and his fellow students. Betsey creates her own family with Mr. Dick and David, and David even takes on her last name. The two are seemingly celibate women, a note that Golden makes in her classification of eccentric women within Dickens’s works (13). The two characters are what Golden describes as loyal, likeable, and nonconformist (Golden 16). They hold the

keys to the houses that they have created. Betsey controls her house until financial problems lead her to sell it and move in with David for a time. McGonagall is the Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts; she takes on the duties of the Headmistress of Hogwarts when the Headmaster leaves the castle. In the final battle for Hogwarts, Headmaster Snape disappears and McGonagall becomes the true protector of the castle, its students, and its ideals. In a similar, yet less dramatic way, Betsey becomes the true protector of David when he arrives, starving and barely clothed at her house. Although she ignored him as a baby because he was not the girl she was hoping for, she takes him in when he has been abandoned. She valiantly stands up to Mr. and Miss Murdstone when they come to collect him. She rightly accuses them of tormenting David's mother and happily takes David into her household and family. Not only do McGonagall and Betsey take care of the daily business of their homes, but they protect them with ferocity when needed and truly are Langland's "nobody's angels".

Dickens and Rowling incorporate the Victorian ideal of the angel in the house into their works. Dickens uses the traditional early nineteenth century ideal in his characters Agnes, Esther, and Rose. While they are all kind women with large roles within their novels, they are uninteresting and unbelievable for modern readers. Rowling takes Langland's reimagining of the traditional angel that gives more power and assertion to Dickens's ideals and applies it to her characters Hermione, Molly Weasley, and Minerva McGonagall. Rowling reworks Dickens's angel in the house to fit her twenty-first century audience while continuing the idealization of his angels.

The Narrative Power of Women

Thus far in this chapter, the powerlessness and passivity of Dickens and Rowling's women have been brought to light; yet as Langland informs us, a great deal of power lies beneath

these passive female characters. Rowing and Dickens give their women a very discreet power within their respective texts. The two authors give their most impotent characters narrative power, as witnessed in the characters of Esther, Nancy, Dora, and Ginny. Dickens and Rowling have placed the power of the narrative in these seemingly ineffectual, powerless characters.

Esther has the most literal narrative power within the text, as she is the narrator of half of *Bleak House*. She gives the novel a first person account of her life in a retrospective diary form. She and Dickens share the burden of the novel in its entirety. In fact, Esther is Dickens's only female protagonist who tells her own story in his entire body of work so the power he bestows on Esther as a character is even greater when taking his body of work into consideration. Yet as typical with Dickensian angels and with Esther herself, she deflects the power she has been given and denigrates herself. She writes, "I have a great deal of difficulty in beginning to write my portion of these pages, for I know I am not clever. I always knew that" (*Bleak House* 27). Esther repudiates her intelligence and power within the text, and yet her narrative is extremely powerful within the novel.

Esther's narratives ground the novel in sympathy. The reader is interested about the events the third-person omniscient narrator writes about because it affects Esther for whom we greatly care. The characters that the omniscient narrator writes of appear in Esther's world, which creates additional intrigue into the story of *Bleak House* and enmeshes the reader in the narrative. Esther is an incredibly important character in the novel because she creates a baseline of interest and sympathy with readers in being a kind and compassionate orphan. In giving Esther narrative power, Dickens gives her the power of garnering reader interest in the novel.

Nancy from *Oliver Twist* is an incredibly powerful woman stuck in an impossible situation. She lives in a world where she has little say over what happens to her and how she

lives. When Oliver enters her world, she is presented with an opportunity to take her own story into her own hands. She knows the general direction her life may take once she helps return Oliver to his family. Early on in the narrative Nancy voices what may become of her life: “‘I won’t stand by and see it done, Fagin,’ cried the girl. ‘You’ve got the boy, and what more would you have?—Let him be—let him be, or I shall put that mark on some of you, that will bring me to the gallows before my time’” (*Oliver Twist* 97). Nancy is fully aware that helping Oliver will take her down a violent path and she will not be able to return to her old life once she decides to help. Help she does, however. Although she does not exactly foresee the inevitable discovery of her plans and her brutal death, she understands the shape her narrative will take. Nancy is helpless in the life she has, but she takes power into her own hands by saving Oliver and accepting her own fate.

David Copperfield’s Dora, as mentioned previously, is one of the least affective women in Dickens’s works that have been discussed. She fails as a productive housewife and succumbs to her illness and dies. She remains passive to almost everything in her life. Her demeanor demands that all around her dote upon her. The reader knows she is not the true love of David and automatically enters her portion of the narrative with that in mind. Her ineptitude at household duties, her yipping dog Jip, and her nickname for David “Doady” all border on reader annoyance and she is a character for whom the reader has little sympathy.

Luckily, Dickens writes her death well. It is inevitable that Dora should die. She is not the protagonist’s true love and Dickens cannot divorce David from Dora. In her death scene, Dora does something that changes the reader’s opinion of her. Her last act is to call Agnes to her bedside and in the conversation Agnes and Dora have, Dora shows a great deal of narrative power. In this conversation she requests of Agnes, “‘That only I [Agnes] would occupy this

vacant place”” (*David Copperfield* 718). In requesting that Agnes be the only one who marries David after she dies, Dora changes the narrative. Although the reader knows that their marriage will eventually happen and is the right thing to do, Dora gives Agnes her blessing and the power to accept when David asks her, which reduces the potential outcomes for Agnes and David’s relationship from many to one. In her final moment, Dora shows more grace, emotional intelligence, and power than she ever displayed in life. In dying, Dora evolves from the passive object she once was, to a character with a great deal of narrative power in granting Agnes permission to love David.

Ginny Weasley shares the physical act of writing with Esther, although Ginny is not the narrator of her own story. Despite this fact, Ginny has a great deal of narrative influence in the overall outcome of the *Harry Potter* series, which emanates from her writing in her diary in *The Chamber of Secrets*. As I have already mentioned, the only real action surrounding Ginny is when Rowling makes her a damsel in distress in the second book. Having begun her first year at Hogwarts and finding that life as a student was more much difficult than she had anticipated, she turns to the empty diary she finds amongst her schoolbooks for comfort. She writes her fears, anxieties, and disappointments amidst the activity of her daily life. In writing her life in the diary, she creates her own identity.

Ginny becomes obsessively wrapped up in her diary because the diary writes back to her. As seen when Harry writes in the diary, the ink with which Ginny writes disappears and a sympathetic voice writes back. Unlike a non-magical diary, where the ink stays and the identity of the writer can be read, this diary conceals her writing and identity. In fact, this diary takes the identity Ginny has written and consumes it to its own advantage—that of being able to write itself and therefore create its own identity. The identity behind the diary is that of Tom Riddle

who we discover at the end of the book is Lord Voldemort. In her article “Cruel Heroes and Treacherous Texts: Educating the Reader in Moral Complexity and Critical Reading in J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter Books.” Veronica L. Schanoes explains Ginny’s predicament:

Ginny Weasley’s loneliness and shyness cause her to turn to writing for comfort—writing that turns her into a vessel for evil at Hogwarts. Her solitude and literacy render her both vulnerable and dangerous... Eventually she puts too much of herself into her self-centered text, and this writing becomes a surrender of her identity and her life. Ginny wrote too much of her life; consequently, she is not able to go on living it. (136)

Creating a full-bodied identity by writing in Tom Riddle’s diary gave life to the memory of him that lived inside of the diary. Ginny put her entire identity into the diary and thus into Tom Riddle, creating the boy Harry sees in the Chamber of Secrets. Rowling explains the connection between Ginny and Tom by saying, “the longer Riddle stood there, the more life was dwindling out of Ginny...and in the meantime, Harry noticed suddenly, Riddle’s outline was becoming clearer, more solid, (*Chamber of Secrets* 316). Ginny’s fading identity feeds Tom’s growing one. In her attempts at writing for comfort and creating a stronger identity, Ginny loses her own self because she chose the wrong medium through which to create herself. She is captured by Riddle who is now a physical manifestation of a memory and not just words writing back to her. As she lies dying in the Chamber of Secrets, the life that leaves her enters Riddle, which is terrifying for the wizarding world because by writing to Tom, Ginny was recreating Lord Voldemort. Ginny devolved from a passive, somewhat sympathetic character into the ultimate damsel in distress.

Ginny’s situation in her first year at Hogwarts seems hopeless. As mentioned previously, this episode makes Ginny into a true passive object without any power. Yet, after the story of Harry Potter has developed, Ginny’s real power reveals itself. If it were not for Ginny, three extremely important things to the end of the *Harry Potter* story would not have happened.

Firstly, Tom Riddle's diary was destroyed when Harry stabbed it with a basilisk fang, ensuring Lord Voldemort would not return in the second book. Secondly, and most importantly, the destroyed diary was given to Dumbledore. The destroyed diary sparked within Dumbledore either the idea that Lord Voldemort took measures to ensure his immortality while he was alive, or confirmed Dumbledore's suspicion that Lord Voldemort created Horcruxes. Rowling does not write this revelation in the book, but she reminds us of it once again in the final battle for Hogwarts, which brings us to Ginny's third important contribution. When Harry, Ron, and Hermione return to Hogwarts to find the last Horcrux in *The Deathly Hallows*, Ron remembers that the basilisk fangs lying in the Chamber of Secrets will destroy the Horcrux they have carried with them. Not only did Ginny's experience as a writer destroy the diary before anyone knew what a Horcrux was, but it brought about the destruction of another Horcrux, Hufflepuff's cup. Ginny's foray into writing helped destroy two Horcruxes, yet she is never given any credit. In fact, Ron and Hermione remembering that basilisk fangs destroy Horcruxes is the only participation Ginny is allowed to have in the battle against Lord Voldemort because Harry and her family refuse to allow her to fight. Although she remains a passive object throughout the series, it takes five books in the series for Rowling's audience to realize Ginny's power as a character in the series.

With the characters of Agnes, Dora, Betsey, Nancy, Rose, Esther, Ginny, Cho, Hermione, Mrs. Weasley, and Professor McGonagall, Dickens and Rowling offer their audiences a complex view of their created women. While displaying their passivity and roles as objects in their respective narratives, Dickens and Rowling also manage to create very powerful, yet quiet women; and in doing so they both make the statement that they two types of women (passive and powerful) can exist within the same character.

CONCLUSION

Rowling was greatly influenced by Dickens, not only in the publication of their works and the excitement surrounding their releases, but in how they created and wrote their characters. Dickensian characters are found throughout Rowling's series. What makes the connection between the two authors startling is how both authors use their characters on the periphery of society. Both Rowling and Dickens's narratives focus on characters that lie on the outside of society, whether they be orphans, servants, or women. They each focus their pen on this type of character, and they rely on their reader's sympathy for said character to create interest in their serialized works, and thus in the social critiques they make.

Dickens and Rowling begin their tales with the introduction of a helpless orphan and suggest that the reader be the one to care for them by maintaining a relationship with their story. They elicit sympathy by writing such compassionate and caring children, and continually suggesting the orphans' precarious closeness to death. Dickens and Rowling include secondary orphans to counter or enhance the protagonist orphan's tale, as seen in Tommy Traddles, Neville Longbottom, and Tom Riddle. In the end, the orphan is triumphant and all is well in the once sad lives of our orphans. The orphan is the first step the Dickens and Rowling take in promoting the social changes they see the need for in their societies.

Once reader sympathy begins it quickly moves to even more destitute characters. Dickens and Rowling use lower class servant characters to make statements about the welfare of the poor within the author's respective societies. However, while they lovingly characterize their servants, they also denigrate them by reminding the reader of their servile, lower class positions in society. They show the importance of the servant in the orphans' lives and in the narrative by

having some of their most beloved servants sacrifice themselves for the good of the narrative and protagonists.

Finally, Rowling and Dickens use traditional Victorian characterizations of the angel in the house to describe their women. Their women are passive love interests in many interpretations of their works; yet as Elizabeth Langland points out, there is a hidden power beneath the demure angels of the house. The same passive women become protective and powerful when observed in this new light. Dickens and Rowling also allow their submissive women to become powerful agents of their own story and creators of the narrative, showing that women can be both passive and powerful at the same time. The quiet power these women have suggests their importance in the social changes Dickens and Rowling desire.

Rowling and Dickens are most remembered for their characters. Their characters are the most vibrant and enjoyable parts of their stories, and the most memorable of these characters are those on the periphery. Dickens and Rowling gave great detail to their marginalized characters because both authors existed on the periphery of society themselves. Dickens's father spent time in debtor's prison and Dickens famously worked in a blacking factory as a child. Rowling began writing *Harry Potter* on napkins as a single mother on welfare. They both experienced, first-hand, the confining social barriers that existed within their societies. Interestingly, their careers as authors of peripheral characters brought them out of poverty into the upper echelons of society.

Rowling's continuation of Dickensian tropes and characters, such as those found in the narratives of *Bleak House*, *Oliver Twist*, and *David Copperfield* grounds her work as critically important. Through her Dickensian characters in her *Harry Potter* series, Rowling reveals that she experienced the same type of restrictive social barriers that existed in Dickens's Victorian

England. Dickens and Rowling provide their societies with a working class hero to rise above their circumstances, just as the authors did themselves, and with their secondary characters they remember their humble beginnings and promise to never forget those on the periphery of society.

ENDNOTES

¹ For the sake of brevity in this thesis, I will omit the “*Harry Potter and the*” beginning of the title when referencing a particular book. All of the Rowling’s titles will now be referred to by the second half of their title.

² Lucius Malfoy is an adamant follower of Lord Voldemort because of his Pure Blood agenda. He holds incredible power within the Ministry of Magic, so much so that he is the reason Lord Voldemort’s Death Eaters were finally able to infiltrate the Ministry.

³ It is interesting to note that Rowling uses the word *half* to denote her *middle* class, thereby further bridging the gap between Victorian and magical societies.

⁴ The general wizarding feeling towards half-breeds can be gathered from how they are always categorized after their magical creature blood, and not their human blood. Hagrid, the half-giant, would never be called half-human as the name alone would automatically call the ethics of their treatment into question. By naming all half-breeds by their magical creature side, society sees them as creature instead of human.

⁵ In Year Two, he fought the basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets trying to save Ginny Weasley who was lured by Tom Riddle’s school diary. In Year Three, he almost received the dementor’s kiss numerous times and found himself being chased by Professor Lupin’s transformed werewolf-self. In *The Goblet of Fire*, Harry finally meets the resurrected Lord Voldemort. Harry’s own blood helps create Lord Voldemort’s new body and Harry battles him for the first time. In his fifth year at Hogwarts, Harry fights Death Eaters in the Department of Mysteries and faces Lord Voldemort yet again. In Year Six, Dumbledore’s quick slight of hand saves him from being seen by the Death Eaters and Draco as Snape murders Dumbledore.

⁶ Be that as it may, as discovered in the seventh book, Harry always held a secret place in Snape's life because of Lily Potter. It is Harry's connection to his mother, particularly having her green eyes, that keeps Snape from hating him completely, and in fact stops Snape from killing Harry. In *The Philosopher's Stone*, Snape saves Harry from being cursed off his broom, and at pinnacle of the series, we learn Snape remained true to Dumbledore's cause and risked his life by being a mole for Dumbledore whilst in the service of Lord Voldemort all because he loved Harry's mother and once she was murdered, his loyalties changed.

⁷ The exception to this is Mr. Runcewell, the son of the Dedlock's housekeeper, who has raised himself from his mother's social status to a firm position in the middle class by owning an iron factory and dabbling in politics.

⁸ Winky was forced to keep the Death Eater and convict Barty Crouch, Jr. safe and invisible in their home at all times. Doing so included abuse from Barty as he suffered his imprisonment, one of which was being forced to sit in the Top Box at the Quidditch World Cup with her invisible master despite her deathly fear of heights. In the end she was disowned and dismissed when Barty, Jr. overthrew her magical protection and left her care.

⁹ Professor Binns is the only professor who is a ghost at Hogwarts. All other ghosts are mascots for the houses, e.g., Slytherin's the Bloody Baron, Hufflepuff's the Fat Friar, Gryffindor's Nearly Headless Nick, and Ravenclaw's the Grey Lady. Rowling explains, "Professor Binns had been very old indeed when he had fallen asleep in front of the staff-room fire and got up next morning to teach, leaving his body behind him" (*Philosopher's Stone* 99).

¹⁰ House-elves have extremely powerful magic, but self-regulate their power in a similar manner in which Dobby punishes himself even when the Malfoys do not.

¹¹ Limbach also mentions erotic triangles as discussed in the works of René Girard and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. These triangles focus more on when the protagonist forms a triangle with a competing suitor and the love interest. Limbach uses the triangle between Harry Potter, Cho Chang, and Cedric Diggory to explain Girard and Sedgwick's work. The emphasis in these erotic triangles is more on the homosocial bond formed between the protagonist and the competing suitor, however, and not on the protagonist and love interest. Much could be said on the homosocial bond formed between David Copperfield and Uriah Heep, and also interestingly, on the bond formed between Harry and the young Tom Riddle in *The Chamber of Secrets*. Yet as that type triangle focuses more on the bond between the protagonist male and his male competitor and not on the woman herself, it will not be discussed here.

¹² It is interesting to note here that Hagrid's first official title in the *Harry Potter* series and at Hogwarts is as the Keeper of the Keys. As keys are a sign of feminine power, this adds another layer to the idea of Hagrid as a surrogate mother to Harry.

¹³ Interestingly, actress Dame Maggie Smith has played both characters in film adaptations of the novels, which may suggest a similarity in their characterization as the same actress has found them appealing to play.

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